Doubt The Sun

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/11513466.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Charlie Countryman (2013), Adam (2009), Hannibal Extended Universe - Fandom, Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Nigel (Charlie Countryman)/Adam Raki
Characters:	Adam Raki, Nigel (Charlie Countryman), Darko (Charlie Countryman), Gabi Ibanescu, Will Graham
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Soulmates, Soulmate-Identifying Marks, Soulmates, undercover cop, Closeted Character, References to Homophobia, Flashbacks, Disbelief in soulmates, childhood bullying, Kissing, Angst, Angst with a Happy Ending, Blow Jobs, First Time Blow Jobs, Frottage, loss of virginity (in flashback), Bathroom Sex, Hand Jobs, gay bashing (flashback), Getting to Know Each Other, Soul Bond, More Blow Jobs, Jealousy, past Adam x Beth, mentions of Nigel x Gabi, some more angst (sorry), Anal Fingering, Anal Sex, Hannibal Extended Universe, more angst (sorry), Darko finds out, Nigel needs to make his bones, I'm Sorry, Homophobic Language, everything goes to hell, (for now) - Freeform, Injury, Injury Recovery, Work Drama, Missed Connections, Reunions, Time Jump, Reunion Sex, accidental dirty talk, Love Confessions, Adam's first time, Emotional Sex, Happy Ending, stay tuned after the credits..., Podfic Welcome, do not copy to another site
Language:	English
Series:	Part 54 of Tiger's Mads x Hugh Rare Pair fics
Collections:	SpacedogsSummer2017
Stats:	Published: 2017-07-15 Completed: 2018-06-21 Words: 35,563 Chapters: 9/9

Doubt The Sun

by TigerPrawn

Summary

Soul mates finding each other on a planet of 7 billion people is getting less likely by the decade, even for those who registered their marks with The Agency. Nigel doesn't even think about his potential other half, never really has. He has bigger concerns than romance. Nigel is an undercover cop and he's just started a relationship with an unknowing Gabi as part of his cover. Deep cover is dangerous so the last thing he needs at this point is to run into his predestined soul mate - the blunt and totally gorgeous Adam Raki.

Chapter 1

Doubt thou the stars are fire, Doubt that the sun doth move. Doubt truth to be a liar, But never doubt I love.
~ William Shakespeare

Even Nigel thought Gabi looked vibrant as the sunlight caught her hair. They walked down the bland street, about to part ways on the corner as she headed to work and there was little doubt she brightened her surroundings. She leaned in and kissed him, a gentle peck before she smiled her goodbyes to them both with a smile.

“A fine woman there.” Darko commented, his grin a little too salacious for Nigel’s liking. It was bad enough he was pulling the poor girl into all this but he’d had little choice. It had just sort of happened and then his handler had pushed it. It would help his cover, and Nigel knew that too - enough to allow himself to be pushed when maybe he shouldn’t have.

Truthfully, she was beautiful. Talented. Not his damn type, but he had to push through that as much as anything. It wasn’t like he could be himself. He felt like a prick, and the last thing he wanted was for her to get mixed up with Darko.

From that fucking tattoo, to the lifestyle, he had to admit it got easier every day. He knew that he was getting ever closer to an edge of danger that might suck him in. Once the life started to absorb you sometimes there was no coming back. But it was the risk of deep cover.

Nigel took a drag of his cigarette and blew the smoke at Darko. “Fuck off asshole.” He jested with a grin as they watched Gabi walk away. “She is all for me.”

He and Gabi weren't so serious yet, not so intimate - she just thought he was being a gentleman. He'd have to get over that shit. At least it was better than some of the guys who were already married when they went deep cover and ended up having to cheat. At least he wasn't having to be that kind of shitheel.

He just needed to focus on the job. Continue to earn Darko's trust, break the ring, get the info and get the fuck out. He'd make sure Gabi was ok in it all, even if he had to fucking use her along the way. Poor fucking kid.

He flicked the end of the cigarette onto the street and followed Darko into the convenience store.

He hadn't expected the sudden chill on such a warm day. It spread through him and tingled over his skin. The tingle focused into a burn that heated the flesh just a little above his right wrist, where his soulmark was located. A shudder went through him, separate from the chill.

A sudden movement caught his attention as the guy being served at the counter fumbled and dropped his wallet. He looked agitated, gripping his arm as he leaned down to collect his wallet. He looked panicked, near terrified. And fucking gorgeous.

Dark curls, smooth porcelain skin. Nicely built somewhere between twink and otter - Nigel couldn't help but think he'd like to get a better look and a full assessment. Just the type Nigel liked, though he prefered them not so jittery.

Damn! He needed to get laid. Had it been so long that he was starting to imagine this shit? He rubbed the burn on his skin. Was he so desperate that he would take a slight discomfort to be something more? It was likely a rash, an irritation from how the cuff on this shirt sat.

His flesh cooled with the exception of the soulmark, still burning.

Soul mates finding each other on a planet of 7 billion people was getting less likely by the decade, even for people who registered their marks with The Agency. There a bigger concerns than shit like that anyways, he had a job to do, a career he loved. He wasn't going to fuck it up wasting daydreams on teenage shit like that.

And yet, the man picked up his wallet and stood, looking around nervously until he saw Darko and then Nigel. And their eyes locked.

Holy fucking shit!

*

Nigel was eighteen when he enrolled in Poliția Română. He'd been a troubled kid. He never knew his dad and his mum passed when he was barely old enough to remember her. He was raised by his grandmother and when she got sick and needed caring for, he knew he had to get serious about money. He had to stop fucking around and get a proper job. He could admit part of the appeal of joining the force was the potential to exploit it. Being a dirty cop seemed like an appealing option for someone who had barely managed to keep on the straight and narrow as a teen.

But then he'd liked it. Not only liked it but excelled. Thoughts of what he could get out of the job in that nefarious way were put aside, replaced by a determination to continue to excel and carve out his career. When he joined the *General Directorate for Countering the Organized Crime* he was one of the youngest to be promoted into his role as Inspector de poliție.

When this case had come up, his background in undercover assignments made him the perfect person to place in deep cover. His lack of attachments helped and the fact that Inspector Elena Albescu had recently been matched via the Agency with her soul mate. She had been the only other choice for the assignment but was now off on extended personal leave to meet up with her counterpart who had been located in France. She didn't speak French and had no expectations that they spoke Romanian so it was going to be an interesting trip for her.

It didn't bother Nigel. Deep cover was another notch in the career and it certainly kept the job interesting. He knew it would push him to his limits, but that was something he had prepared for.

Soulmates? He had not prepared for.

He had never registered with the Agency. Not everyone had a match and even if you did there was no guarantee they would be found, so why put off happiness? He'd done that enough of his life. Dedicated to the job, people would say, and yeah that was true. And sure he would join them at the bars and strip clubs when his colleagues dragged him along, but he never engaged in it. If it was obvious to them no one made mention – he cut an intimidating figure at the best of times so they likely wouldn't dare.

He had to wonder whether his dedication to his job came from lack of a personal life in part? He had no close friends, no family. Even his grandmother had died not knowing the truth about him. He had hidden himself so well.

It had been the reason he had acted out when he was younger, it was the reason deep covered appealed. To immerse himself as someone else.

Someone who didn't constantly feel like an outsider. Someone who hadn't spent their childhood thinking there was something wrong with them and then hiding it when they realised where that belief was rooted. Someone who didn't spend their down time in seedy gay bars as far from fucking Bucharest as he could manage, just to make a fucking connection. Just to forget everything in another person and put off for a few hours the knowledge that he would never have this for real. Someone who didn't live for the illusion of love that those nights brought him.

Times had changed but discrimination still existed. When he had joined the force being gay had still been illegal. The law might have changed but conservative attitudes hadn't and he was pretty damn sure his career would be over if he came out.

*

Bucharest, 1994

Nigel felt clammy with nervous sweat as he entered the interview room.

Ion Costescu, that was the name, though he hadn't remembered at first. They had never gone home together – not that that would have made remembering his name any more likely. But Nigel had definitely met him, maybe flirted with, maybe more, in one of the bars. He knew he should start making his trips further out from Bucharest.

The thought – the need for the thought – struck a pain in his chest. He was working towards a posting in *General Directorate for Countering the Organized Crime* - maybe even undercover work in future, and had to laugh bitterly at the fact that his life was already so far undercover he could do the job in his sleep.

He worked his jaw as he set down the file on the table.

"So Mr Costescu…" Nigel looked at the charge sheet as he took the seat across the interview table. He felt his chest tighten. "You're being charged with lewd conduct."

"Yes, I know." There was clearly more to that response, his eyes boring into Nigel and lips drawn tight.

The fact was it could be worse for the man. Some of his colleagues would have no problem treating him like shit, like some sort of sexual deviant. Nigel almost wanted to point that out but it wouldn't lessen the sickening feeling he had in his stomach. Bitter and sour at once.

Perhaps his expression betrayed that because then Costescu's face relaxed a little, less intense as he sat back. "Hey, it's not the first time, probably won't be the last. You're just doing your job."

Nigel nodded his agreement.

Yes he was doing his job. He was charging this man with the crime of being gay. It could have been him sitting on the other side of the table.

They went through the paperwork quickly, Costescu was as familiar with the process as he had claimed and that made Nigel feel even worse.

"I'll get this filed and you'll be out as soon as possible, it… it may take a while." Nigel added, knowing this was the sort of thing many of his colleagues would consider low priority and make a point not to rush through.

Costescu nodded. Nigel righted the paperwork and stood, pushing in his chair before collecting the file. He hesitated.

"I'm sorry." He muttered, barely more than a whisper as he stood next to Costescu.

"It's ok." Came the soft reply. "You've got nothing to worry about."

Nigel hoped he meant that he wasn't going to out Nigel in retaliation, but that wasn't why he had apologised. Maybe he would have apologised even if the guy didn't recognise him from a less than legit bar or club. Nigel liked to think he would have done.

*

Blue and green.

A glimmer of each colour in the man’s eyes and Nigel wondered if that was what the Earth would look like from outer space.

He was lost in them.

He had a vague sense that Darko continued into the store, that life continued to move around him and yet he wasn’t part of it. And neither was the man at the counter.

This wasn’t like being in a club or a bar - going up to some guy who looked remotely fuckable and turning on the charm. He didn’t want to do that.

He wasn't sure what he wanted.

He felt sick to his stomach and reality started to seep back in like the ebbing flow of a tide as the immediate realisation receded. It was slowly, ever so slowly and frighteningly being replaced by sheer terror.

This man was his soulmate. There was absolutely no way to deny that.

But he would have to.

Darko was only a few feet away and he had no idea who this man was and how he was going to react. An unpredictable entity.

If Nigel was smart he'd go knock the guy out before he could even open his mouth, make up some shit about him owing Nigel money and then get the fuck out of there before the police or paramedics arrived.

But fuck, if he was going to do that!

The man blinked and Nigel realised that was the first time either of them had since they had locked eyes on each other. It pushed him further back into reality and his heart raced as a result. What would happen if Darko discovered he was gay? It would fuck up everything he'd worked so hard for on this case. Maybe even get him killed.

Maybe even get his soulmate killed.

Nigel clenched his jaw at the emotion that stabbed into his chest.

Why the fuck did anyone even want to find this?

The man's mouth opened and he knew he had to act. He took a step forward and the man… said something…

Not Romanian and so quickly Nigel didn't catch it but was sure it was English.

Before Nigel could react, the man grabbed his grocery bag and ran out of the store.

The clerk yelled "hey your change!" but the man didn't stop.

Nigel's breath caught and he wanted to run after him. Wanted so bad to ask his name, where he was from, find out everything and anything about the man. But he didn't. The muscles in his legs screamed against the tension as he rooted himself to the spot, fist balling. He could not do anything, not a fucking thing that might blow his cover.

In his mind's eye he could see the man racing down the street and turning the corner. Out of sight. Gone.

*

Bucharest, 2010

Nigel hadn't been to the *Amiral Vasile Urseanu* since he was a kid on a school trip. It was smaller than he remembered.

No school kids here now. It was late evening and most of the staff had gone home. They'd have the place to themselves if the last handful of them would move but they were waiting for some guy from America to turn up - his flight had been delayed and they had sent someone to meet him.

Bad fucking timing.

Nigel waited. He stood next to a small window, halfway up a stairwell, drinking a takeout coffee and watching his men carry equipment to the roof. Ever so fucking politely.

They'd had this planned for a while. They were already half set up on the roof - perfect stake out for the neighbouring building where their suspect was doing business - both legit and otherwise. And they had to play fucking nice with the staff or the Inspector Principal would hear about it.

Nigel let out a slow, long breath.

It would be fine. This case was going to fucking make or break his career and they needed this fucking rooftop. The remaining staff would be leaving soon and then Nigel could get on with it and not worry about upsetting them and having to play diplomat.

He looked out the window, high enough up to see the car pull up and someone from the Museum run out to collect something. Equipment? Something to do with this visiting researcher or whoever the fuck. Nigel hadn't paid more attention than he'd needed to when the staff had explained and he'd smiled and nodded and hoped they'd soon fuck off.

"Fuck!"

The flash of pain startled Nigel and he dropped his coffee, thankful that there were only dregs left as it hit his shoe and sent the lid flying.

"You okay sir?"

"Fine, yeah. Fuck!" Nigel shook his head and picked up the cup, fixing the lid back on.

The pain - like fire along his lower arm - was gone the instant it had started. He heard the car downstairs pull away and wondered if he should get some napkins to clear up his mess.

*

Adam ran.

Not far, not long. Just enough to come to his senses. His pace only slightly slower as he covered the rest of the short distance home.

He had only felt like this once before.

He opened the door to his apartment and closed it firmly before sinking, groceries and all, to the floor. Back against the door, breath short and unsteady.

He trembled as he rolled back his sleeve. The mark had stopped burning but he could still feel the sensation of it. Uncomfortable. Painful.

Not at all as he had thought it might be from stories he had heard.

He had never believed he had a soul mate out there, but the fact that the realisation came with pain and confusion, strangely didn’t surprise him.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Will meeting Nigel renew Adam's belief in the possibility that he has a soulmate out there?

Chapter Notes

I'm so crap. I meant to post this the other day and completely forgot because life has been putting me through wringer. Better late than never I guess?

On the surface of it, it was easy for people to assume that Adam Raki had a quiet and lonely childhood, but that wasn't the case at all.

He'd always been close with his father, but his mother dying when he was eight, brought them together even more. The two of them against the world - Adam with his often misunderstood disability, and his father a broken man from the loss of his soul mate.

It was Adam who had helped George Raki get through those first few years. It was Adam whose fastidious routines ensured that his father got to work on time, cooked dinner, took care of the household.

Adam was happy, well adjusted. He spent a lot of time at the university in his father's office devouring books. He had his own routines that brought them both comfort and reassurance.

By the time childhood morphed into his teen years they had learned to cope between them. Built a little world in their apartment - their safe haven. And then high school had started.

Adam struggled to cope with the new routine at first, but moreso with the change in atmosphere. Everyone seemed suddenly older and barrelling headlong into adulthood. There was that normal teenage obsession with parties, sex and soulmates. But for Adam there was the bullying that came with it. Too insular for parties, too quiet for sex. And soulmates? The cruel words and taunts of his peers that he was too different, too weird to even have a soulmate much less find them hurt him deeply.

The main jeer was that such a person could not possibly exist for him and he believed it. Believed every word. Especially considering his rapidly growing realisation that his attractions lay towards men. His classmates were right, he was too different. Too weird. Who would even want him if he did have someone out there? What if they existed and they were female, or male but not homosexual? Did those things happen? He decided it was best to believe he couldn't possibly have a soulmate at all.

His dad and Harlan tried their best to reassure him, but the bullying took its toll and he became even more insular. When he looked back now, having been able to grow past the isolation he often felt in those younger years, he wondered if his dad had done the right thing. They had remained the two of them against the world, and George Raki had almost encouraged Adam in this - they didn't need anyone else.

Except, they did. Adam did.

When his dad died all he had left was Harlan, and he was a grown man with his own concerns. Adam was completely alone until his new neighbour Beth moved in. And he tried, tried so hard to be what she needed so that he had someone.

Ultimately it didn't work out, it was never going to. But at the least Adam had broadened his experiences from it. He had a better understanding of people and a greater courage to try new things. And, he realised, perhaps his dad had held him back. Perhaps he could have adjusted better without his father relying on him the way he did. But it didn't matter anymore, and then Beth was gone too. And that was fair.

He didn't see a need to hide his sexuality, he had just wanted someone, anyone to help him through the loneliness of losing someone who understood him. But Beth never understood him and could never be what he needed any more than he could be for her. He moved on - a new job, a new city.

Adam registered with The Agency the day he arrived in California.

The new job, the new start, the impact that Beth had had on his life - all of it made him reconsider those teenage taunts. Not because they felt any less true, but because he wanted them to be. He needed them to be. He felt torn between not believing a soulmate was out there for him and desperately needing one to be.

He could be alone, he could build his own life without his dad or Beth or Harlan. He knew that now, but the loss of someone who understood him was a constant pain in his chest. Perhaps if anyone was ever going to understand him it would be his soulmate? Whoever and wherever they were.

It was that desire for a connection that lead to the jarring disappointment of his registration. There were no immediate hits. Adam knew that had been a possibility, but it still hurt nonetheless. As did his knowing that the chances of anyone registering with the agency over the age of 30 was a rarity, and so if they weren't already in the system they might never be. Or maybe they really didn't exist after all. Despite telling himself for years that this was the case, it still hurt.

*

Bucharest, 2010

In the year since Adam had started working at the Mount Wilson Observatory he had moved on from the insecurity of his arrival and that grasping for comfort and familiarity.

He had thrown himself into his new job, made friends, started to understand people better. His dad might have said he never needed to change, that others around him needed to learn how to change for him - and though Adam still felt there was some truth in that - society en masse was a hard thing to change. So he pushed himself that little bit further when he could - tried to fit better whether he should have to or not.

So when the trip to Bucharest had come up and his boss had tentatively asked him if he would take the telescope on loan to the *Amiral Vasile Urseanu* so that they knew it was in safe hands, he'd agreed.

And then he had been terrified and coped in the best way he knew - to learn every single detail he could about the place he was visiting in order to reassure and ground himself. By the time the trip came around and his flight landed in Bucharest he had memorised his route from the airport to the observatory.

The delay to his flight and subsequent delay in retrieving the precious telescope had shaken him. But there was nothing he could do, he just had to keep going, and he did. Even so he was trembling when he shook hands with Dumitru Balan - essentially his counterpart from the Observatory, who had come to meet with him. They had spoken via skype several times and gotten along well - the familiarity of the man was at least something.

The trip to the Observatory was uneventful and Adam lost track of how long it took, so focused was he on doing his job - delivering the telescope that sat boxed in the trunk. All the paperwork for it clutched in his hands. They would secure telescope and then take him to the hotel and in the morning he could come back and set it up, process paperwork and otherwise complete his part of the loan and then return to the US. If it went well it might even be him that retrieved it again in four months.

As the car slowed to a stop a flash of pain ran through Adam's arm and he dropped his papers. He grasped the area above his wrist before quickly rolling his sleeve, expecting to see a bug or some other cause of the sharp pain. Instead there was only his soulmark, red and angry. He frowned at it as he heard Dumitru asking if he was ok. This had never happened before, in fact he rarely took any notice of the mark at all. It seemed on some bad days almost part of his grief for his parents and too difficult to look at. And now it stung and burned and the pain made him feel a little dizzy.

"I will have the telescope locked in the vault. Please stay here if you are more comfortable? I will be only minutes." His host told him. Adam could hear the tone in his voice that he had learned was concern, and frowned again.

He looked up to see Dumitru was taking the package into the Observatory and felt helpless to follow. He wrapped his hand tight around the soul mark and rocked a little to soothe himself. He hadn't expected this and could never have planned for it.

His arm still burned but it at least slowly died away to an ache, leaving Adam shaken by the time Dumitru returned minutes later and asked the driver to continue to the hotel.

"Are you unwell, Adam? Do you need a doctor?"

There was that tone again so Adam made the effort to make eye contact and reassure the man despite how hard that was for him. He gave a quick nod.

"I'm fine… my arm…" He moved his hand for a moment and Dumitru frowned.

"Your soul mark? How strange. Is it painful?"

Adam nodded and averted his eyes again.

“I have heard of such things. Perhaps your soulmate is near.” The man smiled. “Wouldn’t that be something!” When Adam didn’t respond to the enthusiasm Dumitru must have realised it was a more difficult experience for Adam to process than some. His voice lowered and he said gently - “Tomorrow we can investigate, once we are back at the Observatory. For now you should rest.”

Adam nodded but remained silent.

The thought of meeting his soulmate in this strange place, in an uncontrolled and unknowable situation filled him with panic and dread. What if they didn’t speak English? He didn’t speak Romanian.

And yet… that they might work at the Observatory? That they might have such a thing in common not only made sense but it even calmed Adam a little. There would be that familiarity between them, a shared interest on which something more might grow.

But the next day, after a sleepless night in an unfamiliar bed, Adam felt nothing. He quietly set up the telescope, took the opportunity to look around the Observatory and it’s collections, cringed at stepping into the sticky stain of a coffee spill, and then it was time to go.

Adam found he was glad of it. Just a strange and meaningless occurrence. After all, Adam likely had no soulmate at all.

*

Adam had run almost the whole way back to his little apartment, the image of the man in the shop etched into his mind.

That was him. He knew immediately, and would likely have known without the pain in his arm, as impossible as that might seem. His heart raced as he slammed the door and sank against it, head in hands.

This is what he had come here for and yet he ran from it. Because despite what had happened on his last visit, despite the fact that he had angled his career in such a way as to make this job exchange to the Observatory possible, he had never truly thought this would happen.

Regardless of what Dumitru had said then and now, he had never actually believed he would meet his soul mate. The odds were so slight, scientifically the probability was against it. He had those constant whispers in his ear of teenagers taunting him, and somewhere along the line he had decided to come to Romania and yet knew he would not find anyone.

Maybe he had wanted to prove it to himself, to be done with the idea once and for all. To acknowledge and move on from the fact that he would never find someone that would really understand him.

The sudden truth of it was painful and confusing. It sent his mind into a turmoil that he had never considered might happen. He had met *him*. And it had hurt. It had hurt his arm, it had scared him, it had panicked him and made him question at all that he really was strong enough to do this. To leave everything he knew back in the US and live not just in another state, but a whole other country. It had filled him with doubt and dread and for no other reason than it had been so unexpected.

It reminded him of the death of his parents. Both unexpected events. Both painful. Both so hard to recover from. He couldn’t do that again.

Mount Wilson Observatory - California, 2016

"Are you sure about this Adam?" Jessica wore a deep frown and Adam felt a sting of anger. He knew she cared, they had become close friends, but it made Adam feel defensive. He watched her take a bite of her sandwich at the picnic table on the Observatory grounds.

"Don't you think I can?" He said angrily.

"What? Of course not. Adam I think you are an incredibly capable person I just… don't want to see you hurt."

"I don't understand how moving to Bucharest will hurt me." Adam frowned, trying to understand her viewpoint but failing.

"It's more your reasons. It's a big change, a long way to go and… Adam, I remember when the Agency matched me with Jeroen you told me about Bucharest and what happened last time. If you're going out there to try and find your soulmate, I'm worried you'll be disappointed."

Adam's frown deepened and he shook his head. "That's not why I'm going! This will be good for my career, and I liked Bucharest I'd like to see more of it. And I need to push myself… California is comfortable now, it's home but I need to push myself." He said firmly.

Jessica nodded and sighed. "It feels like you believe that."

"I do." He near shouted, annoyed at her persistence in this conversation. "I have to get back to work." He picked up the remainders of his packed lunch and started back towards the building.

He didn't want to tell her, because he didn't want her to worry more. But the truth was, he really needed to go back and prove to himself once and for all that he didn't have a soulmate, that he needed to move on and not think about it any more. He needed to stop reeling between that want and need and hope and the reality that was more likely. He needed to go back and let nothing happen, as he expected, and so let it rest.

On instinct he wrapped his hand around the cool and smooth mark on his arm, remembering the sting and heat that he was sure he would never feel again.

*

"Damn, fuck!" Nigel shook his arm as the sudden heat flared up in it, as though he would be able to shake off the sensation. Not that it made a damn bit of difference. His arm still hurt like a bitch and it only got worse as he raised his hand to knock on the apartment door.

Adam Raki had been surprisingly easy to track down. It had only taken him the three weeks that it did because he couldn't exactly use the usual police methods no longer at his disposal, and he didn't want to draw attention to any of this.

He wasn't even sure why the hell he was standing on the guy's threshold. The *space nerd*, the guy at the shop had called him. From there it had been easy to find more about the American space guy who lived near that store. It wasn't like the area was crawling with them. And now he stood at his door and had no idea why.

When he had first started to look for him, Nigel had seriously considered that it was to do the man some harm. Warn him off any sort of ideas he might have of a beautiful union of soulmates. But the more he learned about the man, he wasn't sure he could. He wasn't the cold criminal he needed to be in that moment to keep up that pretence. How could he hurt someone who no one had a bad word to say about? Who was by all counts smart and friendly and more than a little eccentric - the way Nigel heard it.

And fuck, Nigel wasn't above admitting that there was no way he could even think to do damage to the gorgeous face he'd encountered in the store.

He grit his teeth and knocked firmly on the door.

A warning? A threat? Physical violence? Whatever it took to get Adam fucking Raki the fuck away from him and any chances he might have to out Nigel as a queer and a cop.

He balled his first, still trying to work it through in his mind.

The door opened.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Mated souls, bonded souls. There isn't a lot that can fight the pull of that.

Adam Raki stood trembling in the doorway. Hair disheveled as though he had been pulling it at the roots, and hand clasped over the soul mark. His expression made clear the discomfort it was causing him.

And, fuck. What was Nigel going to do about any of that?

He moved forward, stepping over the threshold without invitation, and did something he hadn't planned. He took hold of Adam Raki's hand and pulled his arm up to inspect the soul mark - so familiar to him as it matched his own exactly. He ran a gentle hand over the heated skin and then put it to his lips. Stopping just short of pressing flesh to flesh.

Adam whimpered and seemed to be resisting pulling back. He looked deeply uncomfortable and yet simultaneously interested, at the least. Nigel had enough experience of men to know that look in their eyes, and seeing it in his soulmate made his chest swell painfully.

Nigel's lips still hovered over Adam's skin, neither of them moving. Frozen in that moment for what seemed like an eternity as they both felt the pain of their marks ease. They had found each other, their marks no longer needed to make themselves known. Nigel felt the skin cooling, so close his lips remained to it. Hovering but not touching - as much as he wanted them to be. Adam seemed timid and still uncomfortable despite his cooling flesh.

In clubs and bars Nigel went for the confident ones, the smartasses really. He liked the ones that were vocal and sometimes liked it rough. But that was sex. Only ever sex.

This, whatever it was, was something else.

He wasn't sure he liked it. He had come to warn the guy off, whatever it took, and yet…

Nigel grit his teeth and tried to ignore the twist in his gut. He was frozen to the spot because whilst his head told him to get on with it - get this guy out of his life - his heart said something else. It told him to hold the man, reassure him, be tender and gentle in a way he had never allowed himself to be.

Adam was looking at him intently with an open curiosity and a weird sort of hesitation - seemingly torn between trying to figure Nigel out and pulling away. It struck Nigel that Adam Raki wasn't someone who made much eye contact as a norm, maybe didn't usually make much physical contact either. Nigel's impression of him was quiet and reserved, not very social - so far from Nigel's usual type. Though, he reminded himself again, those that were his *type* were men he'd picked up for casual sex only.

The thought of having something more - with anyone - and that intense gaze, had Nigel looking away. He looked down at Adam's arm, lowering it from his lips but still holding it. He glanced back and forth to his own - comparing their marks - completely identical.

Every pair's was different, though usually something fairly abstract. The only reason Nigel had known his wasn't some weird pattern of freckles was because they were that deep red colour of soul marks that was almost black in the right light. And yeah, Adam's matched it in colour too. He could be looking at his own mark - it was both eerie and comforting and Nigel wasn't sure how to feel about that either.

"It's Sirius… the dog star." A small but certain voice told him. "More accurately, it's the constellation Canis Major, but the big mark - that's Sirius."

Nigel looked up questioningly to find that Adam was now looking at their marks as well. His gaze shifting between them and Nigel's hand on his arm - at which, involuntarily - Nigel began to move his thumb to stroke over the soft skin.

Even so, it took him a moment to realise Adam was referring to the mark.

"I… I recognised it when I was eight." Adam continued, voice picking up confidence though he now avoided Nigel's eyes. "When I first started reading about astronomy and physics. I saw it in a book and told my dad right away. Maybe it made me more interested in the stars?" Adam mused. "I… I find it comforting. When I'm anxious or… It's just, I can look down and see the stars." He shook his head. "I'm talking too much, I… I do that."

"It's fine." Nigel's voice broke as he replied automatically, sort of mesmerised by the man and his revelation. He looked down at his mark again.

Dog star.

He always loved dogs when he was a kid. Had a dachshund from a puppy right through till old age - Bruce Lee. Named after the actor and martial artist young Nigel had been obsessed with. That dog had ended up being the one constant in his childhood - Bruce survived the death of his mother and his grandmother, until he was really Nigel's only family. He had that dog fifteen years and was broken hearted when he died. It felt like the death was more than the sum of its parts - Bruce was the last of his childhood and family. When he died Nigel was completely alone.

Looking at his mark now he could only think of Bruce, of family and belonging. It made his throat and chest tighten and his jaw clench against the unexpected wave of emotion.

He pulled his hand quickly back, and Adam took in a sharp breath at the unexpected loss.

Adam looked at Nigel again then and their eyes met. Nigel knew the sadness he felt was reflected in Adam's eyes. He also knew that they could be - *were* - the answer to each other's sadness.

Adam seemed to be struggling with himself. He no longer seemed like he wanted to run and hide, but he was definitely holding back. Nigel half expected the man to try and offer him some comfort, but was either unable or unwilling to and for that he was grateful. He wasn't sure how he would deal with that in that moment… Until he started to feel a desperate need and want of it.

"What's your name?" Adam asked softly.

“Nigel.” He replied quickly, trying to push away the emotions that threatened to overwhelm him.

Adam nodded and smiled. “My name is Adam Raki, but I think, as you tracked me down - you must already know that.”

*

Adam felt the potential for comfort rolling over him in waves. He was drawn to Nigel in a way he never had before. And he strangely didn't find that was terrifying as he presumed he might.

He felt eager. As though he had been waiting his whole life for the man and wanted to make up for lost time. Which in some ways was actually accurate.

He had been too shocked in the store to think much on it at the time, but he had thought of little else since and now he felt like his skin was buzzing. The pain in his arm had stopped and was left feeling empty now that Nigel had removed his hand. He found himself unusually desperate for the touch and no small amount aroused by the man’s reassuringly looming presence. He wondered if it was inappropriate, but if they were soul mates surely it couldn't be?

“I'm… um…” Adam hesitated as he looked at Nigel again - no easier to read than anyone else, which was a disappointment. He had hoped that might be different with his soulmate.

The door was still open, they stood only just over the threshold and Adam started to wonder if Nigel would prefer privacy. “Should I… I'll close the door.” Adam stated and moved to do just that.

“No… I. Sure.” Nigel shifted from foot to foot as Adam sometimes did when he was anxious, and moved further into the apartment to give Adam room to close the door - which he did.

“I don't know what we do now.” Adam said with a shrug as Nigel turned to him. Then he laughed lightly - “Do you think it's this strange for everyone? I'm not used to feeling so connected to someone I've just met. Do you feel that?”

Nigel nodded but said nothing and seemed upset.

“I can see that you're upset, but I don't know what to do.” Adam felt helpless and so did the only thing he could think people did in these situations - something Beth had once asked of him - he enveloped Nigel into a hug.

For a moment it seemed like Nigel was going to pull back, pull away from him, but he didn’t. Instead, after a heartbeat, Nigel melted into him - just short of letting Adam take his full weight. Even so, he was heavy and comforting and Adam was instantly imagining the man’s weight atop him, covering him like a blanket and making him feel safe and secure.

He only realised his thoughts were making his own breathing short and shallow, when he noticed the same to be true of Nigel. The points where they connected ran hot with a desperate need for more. Now that they had found each other, instincts drove them on. Willing them to form that rare connection some soulmates did - the soulbond.

There was no need to rush anything - Adam reminded himself. But that didn’t make either of them feel less inclined to hold back it would seem, as Nigel began to stroke a hand lightly down Adam’s back. They had found each other and now they had all the time in the world and an immediate

desperation despite that. The thought made Adam smile, reaching a new level of comfort and happiness that he hadn't since his dad had died.

The thought, and Nigel's hand pressing a little more firmly on each pass, pulled a shuddering breath from Adam - exhaling heavily into the crook of Nigel's neck. He pulled back a little, just enough for Nigel's face to be removed from his own neck and free once more. Just enough to tentatively seek Nigel's lips with his own.

The kiss was soft. Nigel equally tentative. First just a press of their lips together, eyes closed and quick, a chaste peck that both could easily have retreated from. But neither did.

Adam leaned in again, this time more confident as he kissed Nigel and Nigel opened to him. The kiss was slow, still soft, as they became acquainted with the taste of each other, the way the other moved their tongue. Nigel nipped a little at Adam's lips, and the kiss became more passionate, their embrace tighter.

It was unlike any kiss Adam had known before. He had kissed Beth often but it had never felt like this. He enjoyed the scratch of Nigel's stubble, the hardness of the thin line of his lips, the sharp edge of his teeth. It was everything wonderful he knew kissing a man would be, and more. Because it was Nigel. As the kiss deepened it was as though the man poured himself into Adam's soul.

Adam had always assumed he would find this overwhelming but it was the opposite. It felt so right, so calming, that he wanted to lose himself in the moment completely.

But he didn't need to. He could have this again and again. Now they had found each other they could be this for each other. He realised in that moment why people longed for this. The connection seemed to travel into him, rooting itself in all his internal organs so that Nigel might break them if he pulled back too quickly. The tie between them that the universe had made was being solidified and made unbreakable. He was sure this must be a soulbond - it was always said you would know if it happened, and Adam now understood that deeply.

He had assumed this would be terrifying - to be connected to a stranger, but in that moment Nigel was no longer a stranger. Adam might not know anything about him - his interests, his past, his plans for the future - but he didn't need to. Everything he needed to know was in the bond that became stronger with each passing moment. He could feel the type of person Nigel was, could feel his goodness and his badness, his sadness. His desire, his need, for something more - for a meaningful connection. And Adam loved it all immediately.

It *was* overwhelming then. That realisation and the quick and startling strength of the bond between them filled Adam to the brim until he was unable to take any more. He broke the kiss and gasped for breath, Nigel doing the same as they stood heaving against each other. Nigel rested his forehead against Adam's and they remained still as they regained some control over themselves.

When Adam attempted to nuzzle back into the crook of Nigel's neck, Nigel held him still so that he couldn't.

"Wait! Don't, I… I shouldn't have…" Nigel seemed pained by his own quiet words, his eyes closed and he still looked upset.

"We… It's ok. We're soulmates. We can wait, we have plenty of time to-"

Nigel let out a shaky breath.

“No… I can’t do this. I can’t be with you.”

Adam pulled back and studied Nigel’s face, not that it gave him a full understanding of what the man meant. He had already just reassured Nigel that they could wait to be together physically. Nigel looked into his eyes and despite a deep urge within him, Adam couldn’t look away.

“I’m… it’s too dangerous. I shouldn’t have come here. This was a mistake, I should have just ignored I ever met you and left it at that.” Nigel said bluntly - no feeling at all that Adam could easily discern. “We can’t be together, not ever.”

Nigel pulled away from him, leaving Adam feeling as bereft as when his father had died. The emotion of it shook him and he clenched his jaw, his arms wrapping around himself as he tried to stop from reacting. His chest hurt and he felt the anger and sadness of it boiling over in him.

“Go then!” The words erupted from him. “Leave, just like everyone else. Why should you be any different!” He could feel his face heating as he shouted his anger and frustration.

Nigel turned then and Adam knew the expression - surprise. But there was also something there that was harder to read in that moment.

“Fuck. I’m sorry. I’m sorry.” Nigel didn’t shout, but he shook his head and raised his hands in placation. “I can’t… I shouldn’t have done this to you, I’m sorry. But I can’t do anything about it. I can’t be what you need me to be for you. For anyone.”

They stood looking at each other for a long moment. Adam trying to reign himself in and not cry, not smash his fists to the wall or upturn the small table by the door, as he might have done in the past. Nigel figetted, as though he was going to step towards the door, but didn’t or couldn’t. And Adam felt like he understood that. There was a pull between them that made him wonder if he would simply follow Nigel if he went to leave anyway.

Adam blinked.

He wasn’t sure when it had ever been this easy to maintain eye contact with someone. Or at least, not as excruciatingly difficult as usual. It made him ache at what that might mean - at how a soulbond might work. Of what they might have together and how they might be with each other.

There was nothing but the sound of their breathing when they both, urgently and with no restraint, closed the space between them and fell into a deep and desperate kiss.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Adam and Nigel can't deny their attraction, even if they possibly should.

Chapter Notes

Hallo!! Sorry for the hiatus. I wanted to finish this fic before continuing to post it, and then I posted it privately ahead of time but now here it is. Welcome back - here starts the porn!

Note on Adam: I just want to make a point that this is total fiction. The way Adam reacts to Nigel as his soulmate and how that works with autism is fiction. It is in no way meant to be true to life, and I hope it doesn't offend anyone. I wrote it with the thought in mind that Nigel helps bring Adam out of himself a little (as Beth did in the movie), he isn't in any way making Adam *better* as he doesn't need to be made better, there isn't anything wrong with him being who he is.

Note on language: Probably worth mentioning from this point, Adam is in Bucharest and has learned passable Romanian. Nigel has English language skills as good as those in the movie. Please just assume they are speaking one or the other or moving between the two. I didn't want to jar the text by constantly explaining which language they were speaking at each interaction.

They didn’t break the kiss until Adam’s back hit the sofa, with Nigel following closely until he lay over him - pressed against his entire length. His weight was so nice, comforting and real in a way that not all things seemed sometimes. It made Adam groan.

Nigel was kissing him again then, hard and passionate, before his mouth moved to his neck and was sucking kisses there. Adam wasn’t sure he had stopped moaning the whole time - sometimes deep, other times little whimpers - Nigel pulled it all from him. He only, finally, stopped when Nigel stopped and pulled back, sitting on Adam’s thighs.

“Fuck, I just…” Nigel was shaking his head, even as he started to fumble with Adam’s belt.

“Please.” Adam said in response. “I want you to, uh... I want… um, I really need to climax.”

Nigel groaned and scrubbed both hands roughly over his face before he set back to Adam’s trousers and finally got them open. He shuffled back on the sofa, taking Adam’s trousers and underwear down to his thighs before letting out a shuddering breath.

Adam couldn’t understand the expression on Nigel’s face, and it was hard for him to really concentrate on working it out as Nigel lowered himself and took Adam into his mouth.

That was not something he had done before, though he'd seen it in porn. It felt so good and his hips instinctively thrust up, forcing himself to the back of Nigel's throat. Nigel moaned and swallowed around him, even as his hands went to Adam's hips to hold him still.

A few long sucks at Adam near sobbing, the sensation of it - especially within this entire situation - was too much.

"Stop, stop please…" Adam sobbed and Nigel pulled off immediately, wiping a hand over his mouth as he looked down with concern.

"I'm sorry, are you-"

Adam shook his head. "It's too much. I'm sorry, I get… sometimes I get overwhelmed by new things. I… I've never had sex with a man before. I've never had anyone do that before." Adam bit his lip nervously and worried that Nigel might not be happy with it, with him. Instead Nigel's features softened and he grew a soft smile that Adam had no trouble reading.

*

Nigel's heart was racing and he was panting hard. Adam was fucking delicious, he could suck that cock all night with no complaints - the way he had thrust right to the back of his throat had Nigel's own cock throbbing. He'd given and received head plenty times in the back rooms and toilets of bars. And he'd had some rough ones, but this wasn't rough - deep but not rough. It was sort of perfect but he couldn't regret that Adam put a stop to it, when he could see how clearly it was affecting him. That was something they would apparently have to work up to.

Nigel threw off the thoughts swirling in his mind - that this wasn't something he should or could continue and so working up to it wasn't on the cards.

Just today, just this. He promised himself, looking down at Adam's flushed cheeks and wide eyes. He had to have this, they both had to by the looks of Adam. He shouldn't let it continue, not with so much at stake...

Adam leaned up then and was starting to unfasten Nigel's trousers.

That brought him back with a smile. "What do you want, gorgeous?" He crooned without hesitation.

"I want to touch you. Please…" The note of desperation in Adam's voice pulled something tight within him, because he felt it all too well himself.

"Let me try this gorgeous." Nigel replied, undoing his trousers as Adam relaxed back, watching him intently with hungry eyes. He shucked his trousers as far down his thighs as he could get them and then stroked himself a couple of times whilst Adam watched with wide eyes and a whimper.

"I want to feel you." Adam reached up to him, and he went down, falling into another passionate kiss. He shuffled them around until he was half on his side, half over Adam on the wide sofa, enough to get his hands between them. After a moment of fumbling he had them both in his hand and Adam broke the kiss with another whimper and then a gasp. He was panting sweet breaths into Nigel's mouth as Nigel slowly stroked them together.

"Is this okay?" Nigel asked softly.

Adam nodded as he bit his lower lip. Another shaky breath as Nigel worked them slow and gentle, followed by - “it’s like when I masturbate… but not. Different, so good.” Adam stumbled through his words and Nigel tried to kiss him again. But Adam pulled back, shaking his head as he tried to breath, so Nigel nuzzled into his neck instead. He could feel Adam’s deep breaths and hammering pulse as he stroked a little faster each time, building them to a desperate pace that had Adam near writhing out of his hand. But he didn’t protest and his moans were all pleasure as far as Nigel could tell from his own reasonable experience.

Adam’s breaths became sharper until they were little gasps. Little moans. His hands clutching at Nigel almost painfully, holding on for dear life until Nigel had him whipped into a frenzy. He was near sobbing again, but this time clearly with absolute pleasure as he cried out and came between them. The feeling of him pulsing hot in Nigel’s hand, the sweet elation on his face was enough to pull Nigel over the edge too and he worked them both through the climax as their mixed seed coated his hand.

He was panting heavily as he looked back to Adam’s blissed out face - “You’re so fucking beautiful.”

*

Bucharest, 1982

Nigel’s heart was pounding. He was practically deafened by the thundering of blood in his ears. And perhaps from the thrumming beat of the nightclub.

The toilets stank of piss and cigarettes. This was what it was - Nigel thought wearily. All it could be. He'd been lucky to talk his way into the club as it was. He'd done his research, asked the right questions but the fact was it was practically locked down. Illegal activities took place here and so they were discerning who they let in. Apparently Nigel, gangly for all of his seventeen years, was not only no kind of threat but actually some sort of amusement.

This was his third time at the club. The times before he’d had drinks, talked with some guys. Some his age or so, but mostly older. Older men who ranged from wanting to near mother him to those who clearly wanted to fuck him.

And tonight was the night. After blowjobs the last time he had been here, tonight was the night he wanted to be fucked. He had condoms in his pocket and the need to know how it felt. He had some sexual experience but, he needed to know if this was really what he wanted.

The anticipation was something like terror and he wondered if he should run. His grandmother was going to scald him for being out so late as it was.

The bathroom door opened and Gheorghe walked in, smiling lasciviously at him.

“I… I thought Nicolae was going to…” he had talked at length to a few men at the bar, danced and flirted. And Nicolae had said he would come and fuck him.

“Yeah, he thought that too. But when he told me he was going to fuck that sweet ass you've been grinding on us all night, I told him to think again.”

Nigel just nodded numbly, a little scared. He wasn’t completely stupid - he’d had gone with the guy he felt was least threatening, and now had this hulking, hairy mountain in front of him.

It wasn't like he had put stock into romance, or thought his first time would be magical or some shit. But being some piece of ass for the most persistent guy willing to fuck him in a nightclub bathroom couldn't be anyone's expectation of their first time.

“Look kid…” Gheorghe crowded up against him and then put a gentle hand against the side of his face. “It's your first time, right?”

Nigel nodded, casting his eyes down at the man’s portly and hairy belly. He was shirtless as he had been on the dancefloor, a sheen of sweat and blue jeans his only coverings.

“That's what I figured. Nicolae would bring you in here, lube you with spit and then slam you raw until he shot his load in your ass. Call me soft, but I ain't having that be anyone's first time.”

He started stroking Nigel’s face and then leaned in to nuzzle against the side of his neck.

Nigel let out a shuddering breath and felt himself relax against the bigger man. He hadn't expected tenderness, he’d expected what Gheorghe had just described.

Instead it *was* tender. As tender as it could be in a bathroom stall. Gheorghe fingered him gently, if quickly whilst Nigel clutched at his shoulders, balanced back on the toilet cistern. The man talked him through every part of it and praising how good he was doing, how tight he was. He’d had his own fingers in his ass before now, so it was only unfamiliar in that someone else was doing it - with their own method and preference. It was uncomfortable but not terribly so. Nigel had been hard since they got into the stall, but it had began to falter when Gheorghe started to stretch him open.

“It’s ok gorgeous. That happens… you’ll be hard again soon.”

Gorgeous.

He knew the English word and he found he liked that. No one had called him gorgeous before. No one had ever really called him sweet names at all. It felt nice.

“Gorgeous…” He rolled the word over in his own mouth and smiled. Gheorghe chuckled and kissed him, working his fingers gently with the sachet of lube he’d pulled from his pocket. He hit Nigel’s prostate and Nigel cried out and clutched to the bigger man.

“There’s the spot.” Gheorghe grinned. “Turn around for me gorgeous… it’ll be better like that. More comfortable for you.”

Nigel nodded and Gheorghe removed his fingers so he could turn. His face was hot and he thought he might be half in love with this gentle giant, so intent on making this as special as it could possibly be. It wasn’t like they could just date, work up to this and start staying at each other’s places. Nigel knew some guys did that, and had trouble with the law as a result. But he was seventeen. This felt like his only option.

It would be different maybe, if he met his soulmate.

He squeezed his eyes shut at the ridiculous thought. People like him, *faggots* as his uncle called them, weren’t meant for that. Or so it was said. But Nigel knew there were historical examples, men and women whose soulmates had been the same sex. Mother nature knew, fate knew. And…

Nigel cried out as Gheorghe pushed into him. Nigel had given him the condom and he had lubed himself, and now the reality was here as he bent Nigel over the toilet.

“So tight… fuck…”

It became a blur of movement. Almost totally uncomfortable, occasionally painful, but interspersed with flashes of pleasure. He felt his dick going soft again, but then Gheorghe’s hand was on it - fucking into him as he pumped Nigel’s dick back to hardness and beyond.

“You know gorgeous, you know what feels good? The squeeze of a tight little body around your cock. You cum for me gorgeous, I want to feel you tighten up around me, I want to fuck that tight little hole and cum deep in your ass as you-”

Nigel sobbed as he came almost painfully as Gheorghe fisted his cock, barely feeling the release over the soreness of his ass. Gheorghe grunted and started to fuck harder. Nigel went pliant, loose from release and near exhausted. Gheorghe practically held him up as he fucked hard, deep and fast a few more times before he shuddered and grunted again. His hips snapped a few more shallow thrusts and Nigel wasn’t sure if he was imagining that he could feel the man’s hot cum filling him.

It was better than Nigel had expected, not as good as he had hoped. And within him the whole time, a persistent longing to know what this would be like with a soulmate.

*

Adam wasn’t sure how long they lay there on the sofa. Until they were very sticky and had both softened in Nigel’s hand. Not that Adam minded, he liked the feeling of Nigel holding him, hard or soft. It felt intimate and right - as soulmates should, he was sure.

Nigel was breathing softly against his neck and though he was sure Nigel wasn’t asleep, Adam felt he could be. That it felt so natural for them to be laying together comfortably like this.

Even so, after a while he couldn’t help but squirm at the stickiness that was now drying against his skin. A second squirm had Nigel moving off of him and up, pulling Adam with him off the sofa. Without a word Nigel pulled up his own trousers, and then Adam’s before smiling at him softly. “Where’s the bathroom?”

Adam took Nigel’s clean hand and led the way. When they got there he just stood as Nigel moved around him, turning on the shower, finding some towels. It was strangely comfortable and domestic. It felt like Nigel had always been in this space with him and it didn’t feel even remotely uncomfortable having him there. Adam had never felt like that with anyone before, he didn’t know he could. It was like Nigel was just another part of his life, of him.

“What are you smiling about?” Nigel asked with a smile of his own.

Adam hadn’t even been conscious of how much he was smiling at the thought. “It’s nice having you here. I like it, it feels right.” He shrugged. “I think it’s like this because we’re soulmates.”

“Usually a bit of a loner?” Nigel asked, his smile was smaller now but still there.

Adam nodded. “I don’t know many people here. But… I’m not good with people.”

Nigel’s smile grew again and he winked. “You’re good with me.”

Adam hummed with mixed contentment and agreement as Nigel moved behind him and started to unbutton his shirt. Adam watched him intently in the bathroom mirror, his eyes darting between face and hands as Nigel finished unbuttoning and started to pull the shirt off.

The room was filling with steam and it was getting harder to see their reflections so Adam turned as the shirt came off, still wanting to see Nigel's face. It was nice wanting to look at someone like this, being able to, needing to. He turned to find himself caught in another kiss - slow and probing. It made him melt.

They hardly broke the kiss as Nigel pushed Adam's trousers and underwear back down for him to shuffle out of. Then pulled his undershirt up and over his head, leaving Adam naked bar his socks. By this point Adam's hands were grasping fruitlessly at Nigel's clothing until he finally managed to get Nigel's trousers down to his thighs again and tentatively take him in hand as their kiss deepened. Nigel groaned into Adam's mouth as his cock responded to the touch and started to fill rapidly. Adam loved how it grew against his palm and groaned in return, which apparently made Nigel laugh as his groan became a chuckle.

"You're gonna drive me crazy Adam, and I think I want you to."

Adam frowned at that. He knew Nigel didn't mean insane, that it was vernacular, but it still was little lost on him, so he just responded a breathless "Thank you."

Nigel chuckled again and then kissed him lightly - just a peck - before he started out of his own clothes. Adam wished there wasn't quite as much steam because he wanted to have a better view of Nigel's naked form. What he could see was very, very nice and he wanted to touch every part of the man. He reached out to do so and Nigel took his hand and pulled him to the shower.

Once under the water he lost clear sight of Nigel, but their hands were immediately on each other, touching every part they couldn't see.

"I liked what you did earlier." Adam breathed, trying not to take in water.

"Yeah?" Nigel asked, seeming as though he was also struggling to breath.

Adam heard the cap snap on the shower gel and then a moment later soapy hands were on his chest and running up and down to his stomach. His breath stuttered and he put a hand out to the wall when his legs shook a little.

"And do you like this?" Nigel asked one hand tweaked Adam's right nipple, and the other snaked down to start soaping Adam's cock and balls.

"Oh yes, that's very nice." Adam moaned out the words and let his head fall forward onto Nigel's shoulder as the water streamed down the back of his head and trickled down his face. "You need cleaning too."

Nigel hummed his agreement as Adam scooped some of the suds from his own chest and took ran both his hands to Nigel's crotch - taking his testicles gently in one and penis in the other. It felt so different from his own. Thick and hard and the texture was slightly different too.

"You're very hard, I like that a lot." Adam felt his own sex respond with a pulse of arousal against Nigel's hand.

He moved his hand up and down - copying Nigel's motions rather than going with the way he usually masturbated. After all, he reasoned, Nigel was likely to touch him in the way he preferred to be touched. His legs went a little weak again as Nigel's hand palmed over the head of his penis. A moment later he did the same, and discovered Nigel's foreskin with a little -

"Oh!"

Nigel hummed his pleasure as Adam gently eased his foreskin back on his next stroke - then up and over again.

"Fuck, gorgeous. That feels good."

Nigel's words made Adam's cock twitch again and Nigel gave it a little squeeze as he stroked, which pulled a whimper from Adam.

"Stop… wait." Adam blurted. "I don't want to… um, I think I'm going to have another orgasm soon, and I don't want to yet. I… want to touch you more."

Nigel was breathing hard as he let go of Adam. Adam bit on his lower lip as he explored Nigel further - so strange finally feeling another man like this - especially being so different from his own familiar anatomy. Thicker penis, more pubic hair at the base and over his testicles, a foreskin - which was delightful.

The suds had all washed clear already so Adam turned the faucet to stop the water and then carefully kneeled in front of Nigel.

"Fuck…" Nigel muttered before letting his head drop back and putting his hands to the walls to brace himself.

Adam just studied him for a long moment. His hands still caressing Nigel lightly as he explored the area. The tip of Nigel's penis was pebbled with precum and Adam slowly, steadily drew back the foreskin to reveal more straining flesh. His inexperience scared him a little, but he was urged on by Nigel's coos of encouragement and what he had seen in porn. But first he just wanted to taste it, so that the flavour wasn't a surprise to him. He licked his lips and then held Nigel's penis steady as he stretched out a probing tongue.

It was salty, rich. Not unpleasant, but very unfamiliar. It made him recoil slightly and he nibbled at his lip again.

"You don't have to gorgeous." Nigel was looking down at him, his eyes blown wide in a way that Adam definitely recognised as lust. The men in porn looked like that a lot.

"I want to… I… I'm very particular about what I put in my mouth."

That made Nigel chuckle and his penis waggled in Adam's hand as a result.

"At least you know it's nice and clean." Nigel grinned down at him. That was certainly true, he had cleaned it himself.

Adam nodded and looked back to Nigel's thick cock with determination before moving forward and licking his tongue broadly over the flat head of it.

Nigel moaned and his legs quaked. Adam wondered if he should stop, or perhaps go faster? Do more before Nigel fell down altogether.

He flattened his tongue to make room as he took Nigel into his mouth. Textures were something that often bothered him, and yet he was very taken with the mixture of textures now in his mouth. Soft and smooth, wrinkled and fleshy. He enjoyed it a lot more than he thought he might. And apparently so did Nigel when Adam mirrored his earlier sucking and began to suck off and move back down over and over.

Nigel was groaning and shaking with each movement. Adam wondered if it was too much, if he was getting overwhelmed. So he pulled back and did something he had seen before in porn - holding Nigel steady again as he swirled his tongue around the head. It was a nice sensation on his tongue as more precum surged out in response.

“Fuck darling!” one of Nigel’s hands moved to Adam’s hair and gripped it lightly. It made Adam falter for a moment. He had seen this before too - being held whilst the other person had sex with your mouth. He wasn’t sure he was ready for that, so he quickly went back to sucking at his own pace. Nigel’s grip didn’t tighten or waver - just continued to hold him gently and not guide him at all, so Adam quickly became comfortable with it. It felt nice in fact, a good sort of pressure.

Nigel was huffing breaths now and groaning. “Yeah gorgeous, press your tongue there. Fuck… yeah. Unf, Adam… Ungg.”

Adam felt spurred on by the words sucking faster and deeper until he could feel Nigel towards the back of his throat. He tried not to gag, and remembered the sensation of Nigel swallowing around him earlier, so he did that instead.

“Fuck!!” Nigel cried out, his grip tightening for a moment and his hips snapping, pushing deeper into Adam’s throat. It made Adam’s eyes water but he swallowed again and then felt Nigel stiffen and tremble as he cried out.

Nigel was pulling back a little, but even so the hot salty cum landed on the back of Adam’s tongue and he could only swallow as Nigel made a few weak and shallow thrusts, spilling a little more each time until he was spent. Adam coughed as he tried to swallow it all, eyes watering as Nigel pulled out of his mouth and then collapsed on his knees in front of him. Nigel took his face between his hands.

“Are you okay gorgeous, do you need some water? I’m sorry. I… I didn’t mean to thrust deep like that. It was an automatic reaction.”

Adam shook his head. “It’s ok. I’m ok. I liked it, mostly. You taste nice.”

The words had only just left Adam’s mouth when Nigel pulled him into another kiss, tongue probing deep against his own. He must have wanted a taste too.

*

Nigel watched as Adam went about his routine. He was sat on the bed, a towel around his waist, as Adam pottered around his room. First he took out his crisp and neat night wear, and then went through a post shower ritual of hair combing and spraying deodorant before throwing his towel into the laundry basket and starting to put on his nightclothes.

It was then that he stopped and looked thoughtfully at Nigel. “Should I remain naked? I did like you undressing me, but it seems a little redundant to put on clothes to then take them off again.”

Nigel chuckled. Damn there was something so refreshing about this guy that Nigel was sad not to have met him sooner. That dropped his mood immediately - the thought of meeting Adam before his current assignment. Maybe things might have been different then? No, probably not. This was just worse than it could have been then. He shrugged the thought off, determined to just enjoy this for now, for this night, and then end it tomorrow.

“Do whatever is comfortable gorgeous. I tend to sleep naked most night’s anyway, and I don’t think you have any pyjamas that will fit me.”

Adam looked him up and down. “The bottoms might, but you are a lot broader in the chest. And hairier. I like it very much.” Adam seemed thoughtful for a moment and the brief eye contact was gone again. He continued as he looked off - “I never thought much about having a type, but I definitely think you are my type.”

“You’re not so bad yourself.” Nigel crooned, resisting the urge to turn Adam’s face back to him, look in his eyes and devour him with a kiss.

“Am I your type?” Adam asked, curiously, as he continued to put on his bottoms, but moved the folded nightshirt back to the dresser.

“I guess I never thought much about a type either.” Nigel replied honestly. “Most of my experience with other men has been… well, in the near dark of back rooms and bars, one cock looks much like another. You know?”

Adam shook his head. “No.”

Nigel smiled softly, actually pretty glad he didn’t know, for several reasons.

“I guess you’re my type Adam. You’re pretty fucking gorgeous. Has anyone ever told you that? Because they should have.” Before Adam could reply, Nigel leaned over and grabbed his wrist, gently pulling him until Adam stood between his open legs. “You have a gorgeous smile, and I like this bit -” he trailed a finger down from Adam’s belly button to the top of his pants - the fine line of hair - enjoying the gasp and shiver it elicited. “It’s so appealing.” Nigel said leaning in and lacing kisses across Adam’s abdomen. “And you have a gorgeous cock.”

Adam near squealed in surprise as Nigel cupped him through his pyjamas.

“I’d like to taste it again sometime, if you’re ok with that? If you’re comfortable? I’d like you to come in my mouth like I did in the shower with you.” Nigel’s voice had gone husky with desire and he felt Adam’s cock twitch in his hand. He was no longer hard from the shower, but Nigel wasn’t neglecting the fact that Adam hadn’t cum then - that was something he planned on fixing real soon.

“Do you think it’s because we’re gay?” Adam breathed out the words. Nigel looked up at flushed face and chest.

“That I want to suck your cock? I’d say so, yeah.” Nigel chuckled and went back to nuzzling along the pyjama waistband.

“No.” Adam let out a light laugh that made Nigel tingle. He wanted to bottle it and let it out now and then to listen to it when things felt particularly shit. “The sex. I mean, I don’t think all soulmates do this as soon as they meet.” He chuckled again, a bright and lovely sound. “I felt this really deep need for you. Not just a sexual desire. I wonder if it’s because we’re gay so we need it? We need to feel each other and know we have found each other because life can be so hard when you love someone some people think you shouldn’t. Does that make sense?”

“All the sense in the fucking world darling.” Nigel understood exactly, knew it on a deep level. Adam was totally right. Nigel had spent years fucking in bars or one nighters here and there. Never had the nerve nor the freedom to be able to do more. God-fucking-forbid an actual relationship! That shit would destroy his life in one quick step. And Adam? Well, perhaps America was more tolerant in places, but that didn’t mean everyone was out for one reason or another. Clearly this hadn’t been a picnic for him either. Now they had found each other. No skirting around the subject, no trying to work out whether the guy at the bar is looking at you or the other guy. No checking yourself when you think the guy in the grocery store is flirting with you, because there’s every chance that if you try to pick him up you’ll find a gang his friends waiting outside to join him in kicking the shit out of you - or worse.

This was safe. No doubts. Just the connection they had - regardless of gender - that brought them together and let them know *this is it, this is the one. You can let go now, you’ve come home.*

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Nigel needs to leave, but that's easier said than done.

Nigel lost count of how long he had been watching Adam by the time he started to stir.

Nigel woke early, as was his habit, and just watched as the man woke by increments. Slowly stretched out against him where he had been curled, tentatively opening his eyes until he looked at Nigel. And damn, those eyes were the most beautiful thing Nigel had ever seen on a morning.

It took only a split second for the overwhelming feeling of being absolutely besotted and enthralled by this new and positive thing, for it to turn to ash. As Adam's smile grew he felt his own fade. Felt his heart break.

This had to end now. He had decided one night only, and that had been fucking selfish of him. And cruel for them both, but any longer would be considerably worse. And deeply dangerous.

Nigel felt like such an asshole for letting it get to this point. He should never have come to the apartment, should have left when he had intended to... shouldn't have kissed and touched and fucking fallen in love in one night.

"I like this." Adam murmured, his voice thick with sleep as he twined his legs in Nigel's. "It took me a little while to get used to sleeping with Beth, it's strange to have someone sharing a space like this. But… not you. This is very comfortable."

Nigel felt a lump rise in his throat. Part at the confession, that Adam found this easy with him when it hadn't been easy in the past for him. And partly jealousy -

"Who's Beth?" He knew he didn't sound casual, even if he had wanted to. He knew that if he had to change to love someone, if he let that jealousy under his skin, it would drive him crazy. But the idea of Adam being with someone else, even in the past, struck a pain through him he knew he had no right to feel. And yet he was ready to repeat the question when Adam finally answered with a frown.

"She was my girlfriend. My father died and I was lonely and needed a friend. She… wanted more and so I just let it happen. Because it was easier and with my dad gone I just needed someone…" Adam's voice quaked and he had looked away after just a moment of eye contact.

Nigel found himself pulling Adam tighter to his chest, rubbing a hand up and down his back which had Adam first going rigid, and then relaxing into it. He felt his heart crumbling with each passing moment.

"I understand. It's not always easy to be yourself. It's not always possible." Nigel didn't let himself consider what life might be like, to be free to be yourself. He had never let himself consider it. It

was too hard. It wouldn't change anything to dream, so he didn't. He couldn't.

Adam nodded against his chest and they remained silent, holding each other, until the necessary requirements of urination and hunger pulled them from the bed.

Bucharest, 2001

There was a large part of Nigel that told him not to intervene. Nothing was happening, ignore it, none of his business…

But he wasn't a dirty fucking cop, and he wasn't going to stand by and let this happen.

The door slammed back against the wall when he opened it with force, the two officers in the interview room looking up at him, startled. Nigel had heard outside the door what was going on, he didn't even need to look inside to confirm it. He had known when he saw the name of the detainee.

Radu Baniciu had been an informant for them before in the past, his information had been useful and lead to several arrests and the breaking of a drug ring in some of the local night clubs. The guy was an asset.

He was also openly gay.

That was part of what made him useful - he knew those clubs and bars and all the shit that was going on there. It also made him a fucking target waiting to happen.

And today was the day. Today was the day that those officers, pissed at having to use information from a queer, got to have their fun. Nigel had known it was going to happen as soon as he saw the report - young girl found beat up in the alley behind a notorious gay bar. She was in a pretty shitty way - broken bones all over and jaw so wired she wasn't going to be talking anytime soon. So they had gone straight to Baniciu, these asshole cops. Because they wanted information, they said, because he might know something. Despite the fact that he had already been checked out and wasn't even out in the city the night it happened - he'd been having dinner with his mother. So when Nigel saw his name on the interview room list he knew.

Before he crashed in the door he had heard Detectiv Scărlătescu shouting "just tell us you fucking faggot and we'll let you go. Some sicko curist hurt this girl and you're gonna tell us who!"

He heard a plaintive cry in response before he entered the room. Scărlătescu had Baniciu pinned to the table, arm twisted behind his back and a bloody nose dripping on the table.

"Walk away Lupescu, this is none of your concern." Scărlătescu told him.

"The fuck it isn't. Let the little fucker go or I'll write you up on assault myself."

Scărlătescu let out an angry huff and glared. Nigel knew he had a rep as a good guy, too good for some. He just wasn't fucking corrupt and dirty was his problem. Wasn't in the habit of beating potential witnesses. This was likely now the end of Baniciu as an informant and that was a fucking loss of asset, everything about this situation was fucked and unprofessional.

"Just walk on." Scărlătescu snapped again. "Or are you a fucking cocksucker too that you care so much about this faggot?"

“Cocksucker?” Nigel asked calmly, menacingly. “You’re the one with him pinned to the desk - look like your about to fuck him, and you ask if I’m a cocksucker?” Nigel smirked.

The Detective’s eyes narrowed at him. “No, I still think you could be a cocksucker. Never see you with a woman.” He pushed. “Perhaps you should take the next punch at this faggot, prove you’re not one of his filthy lot.”

Nigel wanted to tear the man’s head off, but he it wasn’t worth his career if he played this wrong and fucked up one way or the other.

“You beating on him to prove you’re not gay? Maybe you’re the one protesting too much here.” Nigel chuckled, still cool and calm - annoyingly so, apparently. He took his cigarettes from his shirt pocket and fished one out and into his mouth. “Let the guy up for fucksake, I want to go out for a smoke break, I don’t have time to mess around with cocksuckers like you do.”

“You-” Scărlătescu started, letting go of Baniciu and stalking towards Nigel. As the man’s hand raised to point a finger in his face Nigel grabbed it, pulled his arm behind his back and slammed him against the wall.

“Don’t test me Scărlătescu. I’d rather beat on a crooked cop any day than a defenseless fucking witness no matter where he puts his dick.” He spoke it in a clear and menacing tone, then shoved the detective hard again before letting him go. He stumbled then dropped to the floor as Nigel walked out, hoping it would be the last time he’d have to deal with this shit, but knowing it probably wouldn’t be.

*

Adam made them both a breakfast of cereal and took a seat at the breakfast bar. Nigel leaned back against it as he ate his, standing really close. He was back in his t-shirt and boxer shorts and Adam found looking at him very pleasant. Very right.

It made Adam smile.

He went back to his cereal, spooning it into his mouth carefully as his free hand reached automatically for Nigel. He curled his fingers under the back of Nigel’s t-shirt and just held him there as he ate. Nigel looked down, he noticed, but he looked away again without saying anything - also just carried on eating. It was casually intimate in a way Adam had never been with anyone before and it made his chest feel light.

When Nigel finished he moved to the sink and placed his bowl, Adam’s fingers slipping from his shirt as he went, but Nigel reached out and caught them with his hand as they did so. When he turned back he came to stand close to Adam, still holding his hand as he stepped up to him so his body was pressed at Adam’s side.

Adam sighed and sank against him in the almost embrace, placing his spoon down even though he hadn’t finished.

“This is very nice.” Adam said gently. “Domestic. It feels like we’ve been here together forever. It feels like you belong here. With me.” Adam pulled on the hand holding his until he was able to press a kiss to Nigel’s arm - to his soulmark.

“Sirius.” Nigel muttered and Adam nodded. “I had a dog. Did you ever have a dog?”

Adam shook his head. “I wasn’t allowed pets.... not in our building. I watched racoons in the park.” He replied, but then he chuckled. “It’s so strange. I feel like I already know you but actually I don’t know anything about you. Do you think it’s like this for all soulmates?”

Nigel nodded thoughtfully. “I guess so. I think so. I never much thought about it.”

“Shall we talk? We should get to know each other a bit? Though… we do have the rest of our lives I guess, so there isn’t a hurry. I just…” Adam looked up and held Nigel’s gaze for a moment. “I like listening to you talk. I like your voice.”

Nigel groaned. “Darling, I wish you wouldn’t… I wish…” He trailed off as though he was stuck for words. Like they refused to be said.

“I wish you would kiss me again.” Adam stated the fact and Nigel laughed.

Adam tugged on Nigel’s arm until his grinning mouth descended on his own. Adam moaned into the kiss that tasted like milk and sugary cereal. It tasted like a life together, like easy morning’s alongside each other.

As Nigel pulled him to his feet Adam stepped back. “I… Can we go to the sofa? I want to kiss more, but I think that’s all right now.” It wasn’t just that it was all new for him, it was the milk and cereal, it was the idea of them being more. “Can we just spend time together?”

Nigel frowned again and then checked the clock on the wall. Adam followed his gaze, it was a little after eight a.m.

“If you have other things…”

“No darling, I’d like that. I really want to spend the day with you. But…”

Adam frowned. He wasn’t sure what the tone was, what that expression was.

“This can’t work Adam. I can’t… I need to explain something to you, and I want you to understand that this isn’t about you. It’s not because I don’t like you, because… I… You must know that I do.”

Adam’s chest hurt just looking at Nigel. He could feel the sadness there through their forming soul bond and it hurt deep to the core of both of them.

Nigel settled them both on the sofa, taking hold of Adam’s hands. He took in a deep breath and let out a heavy sigh before he started.

“I have a dangerous job. Really dangerous. And for now there is nothing I can do about it, I have to see it through to the end. The people I work with are dangerous, if they find out I have a soulmate they could use it against me, especially-” He looked away. Adam wasn’t sure anyone had ever broken eye contact with him before, it was curious.

He put his gentle fingers under Nigel’s jaw and turned him back to make eye contact again. “Especially because I’m a man.” Adam stated and Nigel nodded.

“This pretty much couldn’t have been any worse timing. A while back things might have been different, but right now. I can’t do this, and I’m a fucking asshole for having come here in the first place. I should never have looked for you.”

Adam wasn't sure what else to do but hug the man. He moved forward and pressed their bodies together, burying his face in Nigel's neck.

"I'm glad you did." Adam told him. "I… I've never felt this connection with anyone before and I'm glad to have known it even if for a night… For now"

"I'd stay here forever if I could." Nigel breathed the words against Adam's hair and it sent a shiver over Adam.

He wasn't even sure who initiated it, but they were kissing again and he somehow had maneuvered himself to straddle Nigel's lap. The ground against each other and moaned into each other's mouths

Adam pulled back to gasp for breath words tumbling out on the exhale - "I want you to stay forever." He panted and rested his forehead against Nigel's - feeling the pull of sadness from Nigel and through his own chest. "But, I understand. You're saying we can't be together yet. I have to wait."

He felt Nigel shudder under him and let out a quivering breath. "I don't know how long… Will you, do you really want to wait?"

Adam frowned and sat back so they could make eye contact. "Of course." He replied with a small shake of his head - it wasn't even a question. "You're my soulmate."

*

New York, 2009

Adam had been relieved when Beth had said she wanted to take things slow.

He knew about sex, and he'd watched plenty of porn. He had straight porn in his cupboard, the gay porn was hidden under his bed since he had started seeing her. He understood both the physical need and the physical act.

And he liked Beth.

He just wasn't attracted to her and was sure he could never be. The thought of having sex with her wasn't repulsive so much as it just did nothing to excite him. She was beautiful, but he was not attracted to her.

He had tried to be. Even had been on occasion, in a way… when he had imagined someone else. Someone male.

And now he had to do just that, as he smiled at her and nodded when she said she had changed her mind and now wanted to have sex.

He closed his eyes and imagined a firm, hairy body - like in the videos he watched.

Adam let out a little whimper of need and sadness, which she interpreted as enthusiasm. He didn't contradict her.

*

Nigel's face felt rough from the burn of Adam's light stubble growth and Nigel couldn't pretend he didn't love it. He was going to have to not shave today - let his own stubble grow out a little to cover the redness as well as possible. Either that or stop kissing - and that didn't seem possible.

They had been making out on the sofa like teenagers for the best part of two hours. And it was pretty fucking heavenly. Nigel had never had this, never wanted it. Not when he was a teen and not now, because it had just never seemed possible so it was best never to hope for it. It still wasn't really. This still was going to end his career - or worse.

He couldn't regret it, but he shouldn't have come. He could tell himself over and over that he had come to warn the man off, but as it had been two weeks and Adam hadn't shown up looking for *him*, he probably hadn't had anything to worry about really. Maybe turning up to try and curb Adam from outing him hadn't been necessary at all. At least not until he had turned up on Adam's doorstep, and been unable to resist the man he was born to love.

The thought sent a shudder through him, as much as the little lick of Adam's tongue against the underside of his jaw.

Nigel couldn't even say how they had ended up naked again, though they hadn't been wearing an awful lot to begin with. Now Adam's arms snaked around his neck and pulled him down so that they were laid out on the sofa, with him half covering Adam.

"Favourite book?" Nigel asked as he pushed his nose along Adam's jaw and up into his hair.

"Fiction or nonfiction… would you include academic under nonfiction or completely separate category?"

Nigel couldn't help but let out the swell of laughter in his chest. "Should I go with something easier? Like favourite ice-cream?"

"How is that easier?" Adam asked and Nigel chuckled again. Getting to know each other had been a bit of a revelation - each question brought more than an answer, it gave him yet more insight into Adam. And with each passing moment Nigel became all the more besotted. Leaving was going to be harder than he thought, but he had to go. This would have to wait. For now. Until he didn't know when, but until it was safe. The thought of Darko and his boys finding out about Adam sent a cold chill through him.

It was as though Adam sensed it because his grip on Nigel tightened and they were kissing again before he had chance to register.

The plan had been sitting, talking, getting to know each other. Making out had become part of that and now this? Nigel felt a sudden urgency for Adam. This might be their last time together physically in this way, for now… perhaps forever if things didn't go right for Nigel.

"Adam… let me taste you. Is that okay? Can I… I want to-"

"Yes." Adam breathed out the word.

"If it gets too much you tell me to stop okay?" Nigel asked, looking into wide and eager eyes. Adam bit at his lower lip as he nodded.

Nigel shuffled down the sofa, feeling Adam's cock harden against him as he went. By the time he was between Adam's thighs, it was bouncing against his stomach.

Nigel buried his face in Adam's sac and Adam startled, panted and then groaned. Nigel continued - taking in the rich and musky scent before teasing his tongue over them and to the base of Adam's cock. Adam squirmed and whimpered but didn't protest as Nigel licked and nosed his way up Adam's gorgeous, cut cock and took the tip into his mouth. Adam startled again at that, his whole body shaking, but there was still no request to stop and his precum leaked onto Nigel's tongue. Nigel groaned and Adam shuddered and groaned in response.

Adam's hands flew into Nigel's hair and gripped him, just holding not restricting as he sank further onto Adam's cock.

"Nigel… I'm… unhh, I don't. I think I won't last." Adam struggled the words out and Nigel acknowledged them with a grunt before taking Adam deep into his throat. Nigel wasn't sure he had ever been anyone's first blow job before. In fact he was sure he couldn't have been, with the hook ups he'd had. He didn't care that Adam had made it so long in his life without getting his dick sucked, he just cared that he had the time of his fucking life right now.

Hearing the pitch of Adam's moans change had Nigel working harder, pressing his tongue against the sensitive underside of his cockhead before sucking him back down again.

"S-soon." Adam reiterated and so Nigel went for it. They could both savour it next time. He had gone from wanting to remember every moment of this, to just doing all he could to please Adam. He'd never been what might be called a considerate lover in the past. Even this blow job came from his desire for it rather than Adam's - but now he was consumed with giving Adam all the pleasure he could.

He swallowed around Adam's cockhead as he took it deep into his throat, sucking all the while. Adam cried out, his whole body tensing up as he near doubled over and shot his load into the back of Nigel's throat. Nigel continued to swallow, taking all of him down as best he could while Adam continued to pulse and empty himself into Nigel.

When Adam finally stopped cumming, Nigel started to draw back, licking errant cum from Adam's slowly softening length until he pulled off completely.

Adam was panting heavily, shaking slightly, as he looked up to grin at Nigel and ask - "Was it okay? I liked it… I really liked it. Was it okay?"

Nigel smiled and nodded. "Darling you taste fucking-"

The familiar and yet intrusively unwelcome sound of Nigel's phone rang out, interrupting him. He looked over at the kitchen counter where he had placed it at some point. After the fifth ring he knew he had to get it, that this little dreamlike reprieve was over. He got up from the sofa, palming at his own hard cock, until he saw the name on the screen.

"Yeah." Nigel answered the phone, glad that Adam seemed a little too blissed out to make much noise. He listened to Darko chew him out - where had he been? What the fuck was going on? After the man stopped fucking shouting at him, Nigel managed. "I got fucking waylaid okay?"

Darko paused at that and Nigel could practically hear his grin. "Yeah? How laid?"

Nigel scrubbed a hand roughly over his face. “Look, I’ve been eating some fucking gorgeous pussy the last day. Too good to resist, I just don’t want you fucking telling Gabi, okay?”

There was the normal hetero bullshit from Darko - like Nigel was a fucking hero or something. And then he told Nigel to get his ass to his club within the hour or it would get kicked severely.

By the time he ended the call his hard-on was completely gone and all he could think about was having to leave. Not knowing when he would be able to see Adam again, if ever. If ever it would be safe! He turned back to see Adam looking at him, watching from his position now seated on the sofa and curled against the back cushions.

Adam frowned. “Who’s Gabi?”

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Nigel has to take his job to the next level, causing pain for himself and Adam. He can't stay away - he needs to make it better.

Nigel stood outside the club, smoking end to end. He wasn't sure if it was the fact that he went the whole time at Adam's without smoking and not realising it, or the stress of leaving Adam that'd had him chain smoking every day since.

He wished he could have left things better. He wished he hadn't had to leave at all. He had spent way too much time since daydreaming about what might have happened if he had met Adam before this assignment. Maybe he would have just thrown in the whole job and moved with Adam back to America? But he had worked so hard, so long to get where he was and even without this assignment he wasn't sure it was something he could throw away. He wouldn't have even considered it for anyone else. But for Adam? For his soulmate?

He'd read plenty of stories - from fairy tales to real life accounts, but it was certainly true that you could never fully predict what it was to have a soulmate - the impact it could have on lives. Nigel would have never considered leaving his job before Adam. He had built his life around his job - so much so that he had hidden a whole, and significant, part of his life to do it. A part he wasn't sure he could hide any more.

It was tearing him apart.

As was the way he'd had to leave Adam. After Darko had called he knew it was time to go, he couldn't risk it any further. He couldn't explain much more to Adam than he already had, so dragging it out was pointless.

He didn't want Adam to know anything that could compromise either of their safety. So he had to ask for trust - and it near broke his heart when Adam gave it unquestioningly. Trust that he would explain it all in the future, that his job was dangerous and he couldn't give any details, that Gabi was his friend but that it was a complicated situation.

Adam had just nodded and accepted it. Trusted him. That should have warmed his heart, but it made him feel as big an asshole as their final conversation before he'd left. He'd had to ask Adam to say nothing, tell no-one that they met, that they found each other. Pretend like Nigel didn't even exist until he could contact Adam again. And he couldn't even give a time frame for that. *Hopefully not months.* He'd said. But he knew he couldn't let his desire, his need, to see Adam again influence his work. He couldn't let himself rush this - he had to make sure he kept to the steady infiltration he had going, that he didn't set off alarm bells for anyone.

"What the fuck is the problem with your face?" Darko asked, humour to his tone that Nigel really didn't feel even as he looked at the smiling man who had just joined him in the doorway.

“What the fuck are you talking about?” He replied, trying to not sound as snappy as it nearly came out. He actually liked Darko in a way, they bantered well. He wasn’t a terrible guy, aside from the drug dealing, and it helped Nigel’s cause that they hit it off. Of course he’d been here before with other people on other operations, and was going to have no problem whatsoever with doing his job - with putting Darko behind bars once the time came. But until then he would be the friend he was supposed to be.

“Nigel, you’ve had this expression for weeks. That fuck on the side give you the clap? Or did Gabi find out?” Darko was grinning at him.

Nigel chilled at the mention of Adam, as uninformed as it was. He wanted to keep that part of himself separate from his job before, but even more so now. He didn’t want Adam any part of this life. He shook it off before he could let the thought add to the ulcer he was sure he was growing as a result of all this.

“Just a lot on my plate. Gabi’s a nice girl, not sure about taking her home to mother.” Nigel countered, using Gabi once more as his cover. They still hadn’t slept together and he knew it was starting to get beyond gentlemanly, but his gut dropped at the thought. Wasn’t like he hadn’t fucked women before when he’d needed to, in the line of duty. But since Adam…

“What the fuck are you talking about. She’s a gem. And I thought your mother was dead.”

“Figure of speech asshole.” Nigel took a last drag of his cigarette and then flicked it at Darko’s feet. “Let’s get on with this.”

He opened the door back into the club, not bothering to hold it open for Darko as he walked into the darkness.

*

Adam stared out the window as he ate his lunch in the breakroom.

He had never felt lonely like this before. Something deeper, it gnawed at his insides and made him feel a little sick. He didn’t like it. He wanted to see Nigel.

Of course, he knew he couldn’t. He had promised to pretend that Nigel didn’t even exist, for now. He had to ignore him if he saw him… and he had seen him. A few days earlier he had seen Nigel leaving the shop where they had first met, as Adam was walking towards it. Nigel was going the opposite direction so he wasn’t sure he had even seen him, but just the sight of Nigel had made Adam hurt. Butterflies catching fire in his stomach and burning up.

As horrible as it had been, he’d found himself returning to the shop around the same time every night since, just in the hopes of catching a glimpse of his soulmate.

He knew he shouldn’t. It was unfair on them both. But as he sat eating his lunch his mind drifted into more and more uncertainty. What if Nigel actually didn’t want him? Maybe he was lying or, if not lying, using the situation as an excuse. Surely this separation had to be as hard for him as it was for Adam?

A deep feeling of fear and rejection nestled within him and he knew there was no way to resolve it.

He managed to make it through the rest of the working day when all he wanted to do was sit in his room and cry. He knew it was for the best that he didn't - he needed his routine right now and breaking it would only result in a downward spiral.

That night, not so much on impulse as a new inclusion to his routine, Adam went to the shop again. And there was Nigel.

*

Nigel's palms were sweating, like he was doing something wrong, and in a way he sort of was. That damn shop was so close that there was no real excuse to walk further to another one. So when Gabi had said she needed to pick up a few things and wanted his company, what was he supposed to do?

He had been wracking his brains for days over how he could orchestrate a split up. Nothing too messy and hopefully nothing too hurtful for the poor girl. But the truth was that this ruse was good for his plan, his job. He had to stop thinking about it, about Adam. Had to stop trying to allow for that part of his life. It had to wait until all this was over. Adam had to wait.

The agonising pain that ripped through his heart when he saw Adam in the shop was something he'd hoped to never experience. Gabi was hanging off of him, giggling as they shopped, pressing teasing kisses to his cheek. And then Adam turned the corner.

He was carrying a few groceries, which he promptly dropped.

"Are you ok?" Gabi asked him, concerned, already reaching to pick up the stranger's items.

Adam was shaking, his whole body shuddering as he looked like he was going to collapse. Nigel fought everything within him not to reach out for him.

"I have to go." Adam said abruptly and bolted for the door.

"Wait, do you need help?" Gabi called after him, switching to fairly good English as he had used English too.

"Leave him." Nigel urged gruffly, not feeling the indifference he was trying to project. "He's just some local weirdo. He's always in here doing crazy things." Nigel recalled the first time they had met in this very shop and how lucky he had been that Adam hadn't given him away. The pain in his chest was almost unbearable as he pulled Gabi to him. "I don't know if I like you giving so much attention to another man." He rumbled against her.

She raised a brow at him and grinned, Adam apparently forgotten. "Yeah?" Her tone was light and teasing, as was the touch of her fingers along his arm. He shuddered.

That night he had sex with her for the first time, closing his eyes tight and trying to imagine the touch of Adam as he pushed himself to climax. He held her all night as she slept, as he lay awake feeling as though part if him had died on the inside.

*

Adam didn't go back to the shop.

The thought of running into Nigel with that woman was too hard. She must be Gabi - the complicated friend. He had realised that immediately and knew he should have reacted better, but he hadn't been prepared for it.

Neither had he been prepared for the feelings that descended that night. His own misery doubled as he felt something else - as though he could feel Nigel. He was sad too. A moment of something else that felt like the butterflies Adam had when he climaxed. It broke his heart too much, he couldn't think about it. Couldn't let himself know what he was feeling through their bond - that Nigel had sex with someone else.

Adam woke with his face buried in his pillow and eyes raw from crying. He wished he'd never met Nigel. He had been content, had a good job, was enjoying pushing himself to try new things. He had learned passable Romanian and was feeling settled in a way he never thought he could. But then he had thought that when he had left New York for California. He was growing, learning how to live his life.

He would have been better off without a soulmate.

The tears stung as they rolled down his cheeks. He rolled over and forced himself to sleep more, feeling too much pain to be awake.

He didn't wake again until his phone rang and he saw, as he picked it up, that it was mid morning and that the caller was Dumitru.

"Hello?"

"Adam? Are you ok? You haven't come into work."

"I… I'm sick. Sorry. I can't come to work today. Sorry I was sleeping, I should have called." Missing work, and the lie, made his gut twist. Even though he wondered if it really was a lie - he wasn't sure he'd ever felt this unwell before in his entire life.

"Ok Adam, well I hope you feel better. Take whatever time you need and we'll see you soon."

Adam nodded without thinking then answered in the affirmative before ending the call.

He dragged himself to the kitchen, wondering if he was really coming down with something, thinking he should eat something even though he wasn't sure he felt hungry. He poured out a bowl of cereal, not realising the milk was off until he poured on top of the bran. His chest went tight and he dropped the milk carton, gripping his hair almost hard enough to pull it out.

"Stupid Adam, stupid!" He hit his head with both hands before slumping against the kitchen wall until he was crouched on the floor. He should have gone to the shop for milk. He was supposed to go to the shop for milk but… The thought of Nigel and his complicated friend took his breath from his lungs. He would starve because he couldn't return to the shop - or so his mind told him in that moment and he started to panic. His breath coming in short, sharp gasps.

Then there was a knock at the door and it seemed to stop the deafening sound of blood pumping in his ears.

"Adam?" The voice asked gently at the door. "I… are you okay? I need to know you're ok."

Adam whimpered at the sound of Nigel's voice, burying his head in his arms and rocking. He couldn't see him, he didn't want to be seen like this by anybody. "No…" he muttered and then louder as he lifted his head - "No!"

"Let me in, darling. Please."

"Go away." Adam shouted out, tears flowing again as he felt a renewed feeling of betrayal that he knew he had no right to.

It was quiet for a moment and then he heard some scrabbling at the door, before it clicked open and Nigel walked in.

As Adam tried to work out what method Nigel had used to pick the lock, he felt arms circle around him. He was numb to it, as though he was watching himself be lifted and moved to his bedroom, be laid down and encircled. He sobbed as he drifted off again.

*

Nigel wasn't sure when he'd ever felt so sick in his entire life. He'd woken next to Gabi and felt sick with hate at himself. He was using her, he was betraying Adam and he was forcing himself to do something he didn't want. He had to ask if it was all worth it.

As he had thrown up into the toilet he knew it *had* to be worth it. He had to do this, it was his job. He had to make it worth it and do his part in bringing the drug cartel down… eventually. But how long could he do this?

After he emptied the entire content of his stomach and was dry heaving, he realised that the feeling wasn't just his. He could feel a sickness deep within him, and a conjoined ache in his heart. Adam was sick - but like him - sick because of this situation. The thought that Adam might have sensed him have sex with Gabi tore painfully through him. He wouldn't have hidden it - eventually he would have told Adam everything, once it was safe to do so. But to have him feel that. Nigel wretched again until his stomach muscles cramped and his skin glistened with sweat.

He was thankful Gabi had left for work by the time he had returned from the bathroom, having knocked on the door to let him know. He had muttered a reply and then sat there on the cold bathroom floor for longer than he could recall… until he started to feel a rising panic.

Getting to Adam's place was almost a blur. He wasn't sure if he remembered to double back once or twice, or at all. He should have been more careful, he knew, but he just wanted to get to Adam. Adam needed him.

And now he was laying curled around the man, their bodies entwined again as though that was how they belonged. It *was* how they belonged.

"I miss you." He heard the quiet words before even realising Adam was awake. "It doesn't make any sense really, you were hardly here. We hardly know each other, but… life feels harder without you around. I don't like it."

"I don't like it either, gorgeous." Nigel rumbled the words and tucked Adam tighter to his chest. They lay quietly for a few more minutes and Nigel realised how much better he felt. Not just that he no longer felt sick or panicked, but that everything just felt lighter, better, by being around Adam. How could he give this up again?

He pushed the thought down, knowing he would have to face that, but not yet. He could put it off a little longer. Darko wouldn't expect him at the club for several hours yet and he had made no other plans.

"I think about you when I touch myself, when I masturbate." Adam admitted.

Nigel couldn't help the grin that spread. "Yeah?"

Adam rolled to look up at him with a smile, and it warmed him to his very core. It felt so good to see him like that, especially after the state he'd found him in. Adam flushed a little and then seemed to be defending himself when he said -

"You're the first man I've ever been with. I have no other frame of reference."

New York, 1989

"There he is! Fucking queer!"

Adam turned just in time to see Ben Johnson's fist a moment before it connected with his face. He felt the pain shoot through his nose and tasted blood in his mouth. He didn't even notice at first that he had fallen back onto the hard concrete of the playground. He managed to sit, holding his hand to catch the blood that was flowing from his nose. He felt a rising panic that couldn't find purchase through the pain.

"You stay away from me you fucking homo!" Ben screamed at him.

He knew he'd done something wrong the moment he had kissed Ben. They had known each other since elementary school, they had stayed good friends even as they had grown. Ben had become more popular and they never really hung out now, but he didn't ignore Adam like some people did. They weren't as close as they had been, but they had been paired for a science project and been working together on that for the last two weeks. Science had been the last class and they had stayed to work on their project. And… Adam wasn't sure what had happened. He liked Ben, a lot. They were working on their project and laughing and Adam felt himself getting a little hard. His dad had explained about sex and it made sense, he really, really liked Ben so… It made sense. But when he had told Ben he felt hard, Ben had laughed and blushed and said "oh my god, you have a stiffy over lab work?!"

That wasn't true. He was aroused because he liked Ben, and he was sure Ben must like him too - they were such close friends. He leaned in and pressed his lips to Ben's before Ben scrambled back, startled and bolted from the room.

Adam wasn't sure what had happened, but now as he sat on the cold floor looking up at his friend he felt such a great sadness. Ben started to stomp towards him, fists raised and other boys from class pointing and laughing.

But then Harlan arrived to pick him up and had chased the boys away, calling them asswipes and telling Adam not to mind them.

He was upset, confused and never quite understood at that time, nor for the remaining and torturous weeks of term. Sometimes people didn't feel what he was feeling. And some people didn't think it was right for boys to kiss other boys.

*

Adam shuddered and Nigel pulled him close.

“Are you ok?”

“Yes, I… I was just remembering…” He shook his head and pulled Nigel down into a kiss. It was slow and soft. Nigel tasted of cigarettes and Adam found he didn’t mind.

Kissing became touching and Adam wasn’t sure who started to remove their clothes first. He wondered if they should talk but he didn’t want to. He didn’t want them to have to discuss what would happen next or when Nigel would leave again. He just wanted to feel him there for as long as he had him. They managed to get down to their underwear before they were on each other again.

Adam whimpered as Nigel’s lips ghosted over his neck, causing gooseflesh to prickle. They moved against each other until Adam realised they were both quite hard, and he opened his legs. Nigel slotted between them and they slowly moved against each other with a teasing friction.

“Adam…” Nigel moaned his name as he ground his hips down. “Gorgeous, I think I could possibly cum like this but I’d fucking love to cum inside you.”

A small sound escaped Adam - somewhere between titillation and apprehension. It was something he’d seen enough times in porn that he felt prepared for it - for the mess and the discomfort. But that it was still such a terrifying prospect.

“Anal sex is… it… it’s a waste channel but… there’s the prostate so…” He blurted nervously. Nigel stopped moving against him and propped himself up to look at him intently.

“Adam, we don’t ever have to do anything you don’t want to-”

“I… I want to. I think. I’ve never been with… never had sex with a man. Never… with the… with…”

Nigel pressed light kisses across his forehead and then looked at him again. He smiled gently. “I know baby I know." He cooed softly. "How did something as beautiful as you not hook up? Guys must have been knocking your door down.”

Adam was sure it was meant as flattery but he found it jarring to talk about other men whilst they were like this. “I don’t read people well.” Adam reminded him as an explanation. “No one knocked on my door.”

Nigel barked out a laugh and buried his head in the crook of Adam’s neck.

“Why is that funny?” Adam asked, he paused a moment before admitting - “I was too scared to be with men.”

Nigel pulled back again then, sobering.

“I don’t read people well. I can’t tell when a woman is flirting with me, much less a man. And when I… the few times I thought I knew, I was wrong. I got beat up several times. First time when I was fourteen and-” he shook his head. “I never knew who to trust.”

“You can trust me.” Nigel spoke with determination as he pulled back onto his knees and held Adam against his chest. “Adam, there’s a lot I can’t tell you right now and that’s killing me. But I… Do you… let me show you how?”

Adam pulled back enough to look at him, trying to work out what he meant.

“Do you want to fuck me gorgeous? See what all the fuss is about?”

Adam found himself smiling at Nigel’s words and the image of it made his cock jump. He had thought many times about the different ways men could have sex with each other and he couldn’t deny his curiosity. The thought of being with Nigel in that way was tantalising and strangely much less daunting. He could reason it - he often masturbated, so this would be much more like thrusting into his palm. He had had sex with Beth, though never anally. Even so this way seemed something more familiar.

“Ok… Yeah…” Adam bit his lower lip and Nigel grinned.

*

Nigel let out a long breath as Adam bottomed out. It had been a hell of a long time since he had been the one getting fucked. It wasn’t that he didn’t enjoy it, it just wasn’t his go to position. And truth was, a lot of the guys he’d been with had fancied him for his gruff exterior and assumed he was a top. Not all of them - there were notable exceptions - and he was fucking delighted to make Adam one of those.

He had worked himself open, slowly, showing Adam until he joined in and then took over. That had lasted a damn age. He was so fucking turned on that his cock kept twitching and his ass would tighten around Adam's fingers every time it did. He had started on his back but then ended up on all fours, loving the feel of Adam's fingers pumping in and out.

When he’d finally been stretched enough to take Adam, the kid had doned a condom and used so much lube that it was everywhere. Nigel had not given a single fuck, because all he could care about by that point was taking Adam Raki’s magnificent cock.

He winced a little as Adam pulled back, his lube-soaked hands on Nigel’s hips as he held him in place.

“Not like the pornos okay gorgeous? I haven’t done this in awhile, I don’t want to be jack-hammered into ER. Just nice and slow.” Nigel guided.

He heard Adam audibly swallow and imagined the kid was nodding as he slowly pushed back in. It made Nigel fucking shiver. He wasn’t sure he wanted this to end any time soon.

He had never felt a connection like this - as though no matter what position or sexual act, their bodies were built to move together. Thoughts of being with anyone else were a distant memory and Nigel felt his chest hurt from the feeling of Adam - being so full of him in every sense.

Another few slow, thrusts eased Nigel open enough for him to feel every single damn brush against his prostate. When he let out a little moan. Adam planted his knees a bit more firmly and began to roll his hips - thrusting in time with their thudding pulses and building up speed as their blood pumped faster.

“Fuck, yeah Adam… yeah gorgeous, there. There…” Nigel was quickly becoming a shattered mess as Adam found his prostate. With each glancing touch Nigel’s cock jumped and he fought the need to take hold of it. “Make me cum gorgeous.” He begged until he was rocking back onto Adam and taking him as deep as he could until he realised it wasn’t enough.

“A-adam… Ahhhh fuck me baby…” Nigel pleaded and tried to grab for Adam’s thigh.

"Like the pornos?" Adam asked, breathless.

"Yeah gorgeous... fuck... hnng... yeah fuck me..." Nigel managed to articulate through groans.

Letting out something between a grunt and a whimper, Adam began fucking into him with abandon. His own little cries and groans making Nigel all the more turned on. His cock felt heavy and his balls ached. He bit into his lower lip almost enough to draw blood as he reached down and wrapped his hand around his straining dick. Two strokes was all it took for him to explode all over the bed beneath him. His entire body spasming and shuddering to the point where he could feel every inch of Adam’s cock being gripped within him and he never wanted him to pull out.

Adam let out his own strangled cry as Nigel’s clenching muscles pulled his climax out of him and then milked every drop of cum he had. He shuddered against Nigel, fingers digging into flesh as his whole body shook with the orgasm.

It felt so fucking good.

Nigel collapsed down onto the bed, into his own mess, with Adam pressed to his back.

“You okay gorgeous?” Nigel managed to mumble through the postorgasmic haze.

He felt Adam nod against his back. “It’s… you’re very tight.”

Nigel chuckled and he heard Adam wince at the tightening of his muscles. “Are you still hard? If… If you’re comfortable don’t pull out until you soften. It’s easier.”

He felt Adam nod against him again. “I like being inside you. I’m very comfortable.”

Nigel loved Adam’s blissed out murmur and wondered if they could just stay like this all day.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Everything goes to hell, for now.

Chapter Notes

Hi all, posting this a day early because I am having my top surgery tomorrow and they have bumped me from 10am to 7am, so no time to do this tomorrow.

This is a pretty angsty chapter, but again rest assured, that there is a happy ending and all will be well!! ♥♥♥

Adam couldn't help his smile. It was a reprieve, he knew, but enough for now. After sex they had showered and then just snuggled, talked. It felt like a normal relationship. He made them mac and cheese for a late lunch, they sat at the little table eating it with their legs entwined beneath.

It was such a pleasant fantasy that Adam could let himself believe it.

In the early evening Nigel said he'd have to go soon - to work. They kissed on the sofa, snuggled against each other, Nigel's fingers playing in his curls. He could imagine lazy Sunday afternoons spent this way.

"What happens now?" Adam asked.

"Nothing has changed darling. I need to finish my job before it's safe for us. I should never have come here but when I could feel…" He trailed off and Adam knew if he looked the man's face would be sad. "I need you to be strong for me Adam. And I… I'm not going to see Gabi anymore."

That comforted Adam a little. He understood as much as he could, it seemed as though Gabi was part of his job - important. And maybe Nigel should stay with Gabi? But the thought of it - of them being together intimately again - made Adam feel sick. So he nodded and left it at that.

Nigel's breath warmed the side of his neck and he nuzzled in before they resumed kissing for a short while until Nigel could no longer put off leaving.

Nigel kissed him again when they said goodbye and Adam had felt light and joyful when he closed the door and leaned against it. He knew that soon he would be sad again at the man's loss, but he needed to hold onto that little happiness as long as he could. To try and see him through a little longer, whilst he waited.

He stood at the door for some long minutes, trying to memorise everything - the way Nigel grinned and purred *gorgeous*; the way he smelled of cigarettes and faintly of liquor; the way his hands and mouth felt on Adam's body; the low rumble of his words when they talked for long hours; the way it had felt to be inside him. So wholly connected to someone else and every part of their pleasure and happiness.

Adam was startled when there was a knock at the door, and his immediate thought was that Nigel had returned. He hadn't expected any other guests, rarely had visitors at all and never unexpectedly. Thinking that it could only be Nigel, he opened the door with a smile.

*

"Where's Darko?" Nigel asked the kid behind the bar. He looked nervous and shrugged and Nigel rolled his eyes and scoffed. The nervous ones never lasted here. Sure working at a strip club sounded like a fucking dream - but the reality of that club being used as a front by some exceedingly dangerous people did nothing for staff turnover. Some of the ones that were a little *too* nervous, who seemed the type to share information that wasn't theirs - perhaps even to the police - had disappeared in the past.

He made a mental note to warn this kid later - get out now because if you try to later you might find yourself at the bottom of the river. He'd done it before - not enough to draw concern, and in such a way as to be appear to be actually bullying them out of the job because he'd taken a dislike to them. Wasn't like he was stupid enough to outright warn them. He wasn't sure how some of these kids got to their twenties and were still this fucking naive!

Nigel nodded and walked behind the bar and into the back, greeting the random people he found back there about their various legit and non-legit businesses, before ending up in Darko's office.

With the man himself not present Nigel decided it would be a good chance to call Gabi. He had no intention of breaking up with her over the phone, but he could arrange for them to see each other the next day. He wasn't sure how he was going to do it - either way the girl was likely to get hurt and he couldn't exactly tell her the truth.

He dialled and the phone rang through to voicemail - "This is Gabi, leave a message." her cheery voice made his chest ache. She was sweet, she didn't deserve this just for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, meeting the wrong guy.

He called again but still nothing so he sent a message.

~ Hey Gabi, call me when you get the chance.

He realised as soon as he sent it that it was the first contact with her since they slept together. That was likely to already have her wondering what the fuck was going on.

And would this be a lot fucking easier if he hadn't just slept with the girl? How was this all going to seem to her? How would it make her feel? To be broken up with right after that?

He needed to let her know that it wasn't her or anything she had or hadn't done. He was prepared to be the asshole here for her sake, and Adam's.

Nigel mulled it over as he made himself comfortable on the ratty old sofa at the back of the office, stretching his legs out. He could say he has a wife somewhere, already has a girlfriend or

something? That them having sex made him realise he couldn't keep doing this. But that was too easy to check out, and if it got back to Darko and his lot they would know the lie of it. He needed to tell her something that he could get away with but that would cause minimal damage and neither of those options allowed for any aspect of the truth.

When his phone buzzed, Nigel assumed it to be Gabi, but the text was from Darko.

"About fucking time."

Darko was late now and then, but this was ridiculous. They had shit to do and Nigel was growing impatient to move this whole thing on so that he could been done with it.

~ Sorry brother, change of plans. Meet me at Dalca's warehouse, the one by the river.

Nigel grunted as he got up from the sofa. What the hell was Darko doing out in that shithole? He couldn't help but be hopeful that it would be something that might take him a step closer to his goal and the end of this shitty assignment.

*

"Can I help you?" Adam's face fell and his fingers tightened on the door when he opened it to a complete stranger, not Nigel at all.

"American?" The man asked with a grin in rough English. "I love Americans!"

He let himself in passed Adam, not pushy enough for it to seem anything other than inappropriate. Even so Adam's eyes scanned the room for his phone, ready to call the police.

"Do-do I know you?" His voice quavered.

"We have a mutual friend I think." The man replied, still smiling and looking around the apartment. "Nigel. Yeah, I'm sure I've seen you around and I saw my good buddy leave here earlier so..." He seemed to be waiting for a response.

At the sound of the name Adam's chest tightened. No one was meant to know. His heart pounded and he shook his head, knowing that lying wasn't exactly something he did well. "No… I, I don't know anyone called Nigel."

The man quirked a brow, still smiling. The smile had lasted so long that Adam concluded that it must be entirely fake.

"Now, friend, I think you're lying to me. And I really don't like liars."

Adam wasn't sure where he was going, or what he would do, but he acted on his sudden and immediate urge to run. Before he got to the door the man grabbed his arm, gripping it tightly and wrenching it. Pain exploded in his shoulder and he cried out.

"Holy fucking shit." He said, and Adam wasn't sure at first what he meant. But when he looked up through the tears of pain that had sprung up in his eyes, he could see the man was studying his arm.

"No!" Adam cried and tried to pull away, more pain shooting through his arm until his vision was practically white from the agony.

“Well… that looks very fucking familiar.” The man growled. Adam could feel both hands clamped on him now, moving him to better see the soulmark that would betray them. “That fucking cocksucker.”

The man twisted Adam’s arm until he couldn’t hear anything but his own cries. He wanted to run, wanted to panic, but his body could do neither. He felt completely consumed by pain, outside and in, until he wasn’t sure anymore what was even happening. The man dropped him to the floor and let him stay there sobbing as he began talking again, ordering someone around. Adam tried to focus - the words were Romanian and spoken quickly and angrily.

He could only pick out one familiar word before he passed out from the pain -

“Gabi.”

*

Bucharest, 2017

"Hello gorgeous." Nigel crooned and enjoyed the way the girl blushed in response. Mostly because he knew her to be a feisty young woman who seemed to turn a little to mush around him.

Regardless of sexuality or gender, it was always nice to feel that you pulled that response from someone when you flirted with them. And he was flirting. His heart might not be in it in this case, but he was good at it. He had spent a lot of time in clubs and bars honing those skills. Flirting was fine. It was what came after that might be an issue in this case.

But... he didn't seem to have much choice.

He had met Gabi a couple of weeks earlier at a cafe owned by one of Darko's crew. She played there - the cello - though not for much longer. She had smiled at him and introduced herself after she had finished playing her set. She had told him she was starting a new job soon - a seat at the Bucharest Opera House. Nigel wasn't stupid. He knew she was angling for his number, wanting it offered rather than having to ask. And he hadn't given it. Not that time.

He had gone home and mulled over how starting something with her could be good for his cover, given that she was known to Darko's gang. It legitimised him on a level that would otherwise take a while to get to. He had damn near decided against it anyway - not wanting to have to deal with all that shit, and certainly not wanting to drag an innocent young woman into his mess. But then he had stupidly mentioned it in passing to his handler. Before he knew it, it was practically an order. And there was no good reason he could use to get out of it. No reason at all.

So now he was turning on the charm. Not too much - he wanted her to feel like he was believably taking this slow rather than avoiding taking it fast. She was a gorgeous girl and he liked her a lot, but sex with women wasn't something he cared for in the least. He’d done it before, now and then. First when he was seventeen - about a week before he snuck out to his first underground gay bar.

"This is my last night here Nigel. Do you... Do you want to come see me play at the Opera House sometime?" She asked, somewhere between shy and sultry.

"Of course, gorgeous. You play like an angel... and you look like one too."

She laughed at that and put her hand on his arm. "Flattery will get you everywhere." She practically batted her eyelashes at him and he grinned at her.

Inside he felt a dark, cold pain in his chest. He realised he was about to start plumbing new depths in just how much he could detest himself.

*

Nigel was halfway to the warehouse when it felt like the wind was knocked out of him. He felt a pain ache through him but couldn't pinpoint where it was or what had caused it. He pulled the car over to the side of the road and stopped. It took a few minutes to catch his breath and realise he wasn't in pain at all.

"Adam."

He looked behind him to see if the road was clear enough for him to swing the car around and head back and over to Adam's apartment. He was just about to pull around when a thought crossed his mind. More of a feeling, a premunition or some shit.

He picked up his phone and dialled a number he had memorised. "Uncle Ioan. I need to arrange for some flowers. Yeah, you can reach me on this number. A dozen red roses."

He hung up the phone and felt sick. Nerves and more. He had never expected to call his handler before it was time for extraction. But he had to, he knew. He knew it deep in his bones - Darko had Adam.

*

"Are you ok?" The light, feminine voice was full of concern.

Adam tried to move and ended up wincing with the pain, as he opened his eyes. He was not on the floor - higher, on a lumpy sofa. It took a moment to focus and then he could see crouched next to him the girl he had seen with Nigel in the shop.

Gabi.

His entire body hurt.

"You're… you…" He stammered, unable to find the words much less say them.

She gave him a gentle smile. "It's ok, don't move. It looks like your shoulder is dislocated or something. I don't… I have no idea how you fix something like that."

Gabi stopped talking and started biting at her lower lip. Adam took the moment of silence to look around, they were in a warehouse - there were a few crates over to one side and two parked cars. He and Gabi were in some sort of breakout area that was attached to a small office and was roughly separated from the rest of the interior with low, temporary walls made of painted chipboard.

There were a few large men stood around towards the crates, one sat on the crates flicking through his phone. One stood next to a slightly open door at the opposite end to where he and Gabi were.

"Where am I?" Adam asked looking back to Gabi, wincing as every little movement shot pain through his shoulder and arm. Her bottom lip was trembling and he wondered if she was scared.

She had to be as scared as he was. She shrugged.

“A couple of those guys grabbed me outside my work. Took my purse… They brought me here. You were already here, passed out.” She moved back and sat on a low table in front of the sofa. “Don’t I know you from somewhere?” She asked, frowning and holding her arms tight around herself.

Adam didn’t know whether to say yes or no, and before he could help himself he said “you’re Gabi.”

Gabi’s frown deepened. “Yeah. Who are you?”

Before Adam could answer the door opened fully and the man Adam recognised as the one from his apartment spoke. He was talking to someone just out of view but was then walking through the door.

“About time brother. It’s a big day!”

“Yeah? What are you up to? There aren’t any shipments to sort this week.” Adam recognised Nigel’s voice immediately, and apparently so did Gabi from the way her head whipped around. They both stood watching as Nigel grinned at Darko as though this were some game. He willed Nigel to look over and see them, help them get out of whatever this was, but then realised that that might make things worse. Was this the danger that Nigel had warned about?

Then Nigel looked over and saw them and his face dropped, his eyes went dark and he looked at the other man - “What is this Darko?”

“Oh! Our guests?” The man - Darko - was still grinning as he ushered Nigel towards them. Gabi made to stand but the man nearest to them cleared his throat, a gun pointing at them as he motioned at her to stay sitting. She sat back down on the table, now turned to watch Nigel and Darko approaching them.

“Nigel?” Gabi’s voice trembled.

“Hush now.” Darko replied, waving a dismissive hand at them. “What do you make of this then Nigel?”

“What are you doing brother?” Nigel asked, his jaw so tight Adam could see the muscles tensing.

“I’m doing nothing, you’ll be the one *doing*”

Adam flinched as Darko gestured for some of the men to come over. Darko held out his hand to closest one and the man handed him a gun.

“You’ve been with us a while now Nigel, but you’re yet to… as they say in American, become a made man. To make your bones. It’s getting to the point where I may have to start defending your commitment to our venture. Normally, I’d wait until the next opportunity arose amongst one of our competitors or another problematic situation that might require that level of force… But this opportunity presented itself instead-” Darko indicated Adam and Gabi with a wave of his hand.

“You want me to shoot them.” Nigel stated rather than questioned and it made Adam’s chest tighten.

He still didn't understand everything, but he understood Nigel, he was sure. Nigel wouldn't be able to shoot him. Or Gabi. Nigel couldn't do this and he wasn't sure what was going to happen as a result.

"Only one." Darko clarified, handing the gun to Nigel.

Without hesitation Nigel cocked the gun and leveled it at Adam, causing both Adam and Gabi to draw a gasping breath.

*

Mount Wilson Observatory, 2014

"Did you hear about David?" Jessica asked as she dropped into the seat opposite Adam and pulled out her packed lunch. There was a light coolness on the wind that made the days bearable and lunches outside more than pleasant. It was a standing date at this point.

Adam shook his head, chewing on his sandwich. He wasn't sure what he was supposed to have heard about David from Human Resources, but he *was* sure that Jessica was going to tell him.

"He met his soulmate." Jessica said before biting into her sandwich. She chewed and swallowed so fast that Adam wondered if she'd get indigestion.

"At his gym. Can you believe it? He never registered with The Agency, then bam! Some new personal trainer. Apparently knew as soon as he saw him, just had a tingly feeling all over and then spotted the guy's soulmark on his calf. Isn't that amazing? I don't know the last time I heard of someone finding their soulmate in their hometown!"

"Guy? David's gay?" Adam blinked, the question popping out before he had chance to think about it.

Jessica gave him a look that he couldn't quite work out.

"Yeah, well… I mean, I think he's bi? But I guess mother nature had her plans." Jessica smiled.

"That's nice." Adam nodded. At a loss to know what else to say.

He could never understand how the world could still be so homophobic in many ways even when soulmates throughout history had included same sex couples.

"Yeah, it is." Jessica reached over and squeezed his hand before taking another bite of her sandwich,

Adam nodded again, feeling an ache in each of the phantom bruises his body felt, reminding him of each time he'd been beaten up and why.

*

He knew Darko was up to something, but this was beyond anything he could have imagined. It was all he could do not to scream when he saw Adam there, clearly injured and terrified. Even so, as soon as Darko gave him the gun, he knew what he had to do.

“Him then?” Darko laughed. “With no hesitation? That’s cold Nigel, real cold.” Darko’s words dripped with cruel amusement.

“This guy has been fucking stalking me for weeks. Of course I’m going to choose him. I can’t believe you would even bring Gabi into this.” Nigel spat the words.

“Really? You can’t?” Darko growled, rounding on Nigel. “You can’t see that I would bring both of them because you are fucking both of them?”

Nigel didn’t bother to look over, he knew Adam’s face would likely be filled with anguish, Gabi’s with confusion. Neither reaction was important right now. Nigel let out a low and amused huff, chuckling a little before he said - “Damn Darko, is this a joke? Some sort of initiation prank? You want me to say something more? He’s my fucking stalker.” Nigel continued to laugh at Darko, even though he could see the man wasn’t buying it for a moment.

Darko’s face looked like thunder - anger about to fully explode from him. Nigel prepared himself, then was surprised when Darko moved past him and stalked to Adam, grabbing up the man’s arm. Adam cried out in pain as Darko twisted his arm to show the soulmark.

Just as quickly he dropped his arm and stalked back over pulling out his own gun pressing it to Nigel’s temple.

“Now, you listen to me you fucking cocksucker. I need to know you haven’t lied to me about anything else. I need people I can trust. So here’s what you are going to do. You’re going to put a bullet between your little pussy boy’s eyes or I will shoot him, and then her, and then you. And don’t make me do it brother, don’t make me put you down like that.”

Nigel let out a shaky breath as he straightened his arm, aiming the gun once more at Adam.

*

"Do it." Darko growled.

Despite the gun pointed at him, Adam knew Nigel wouldn't pull the trigger. He was completely sure of it to the point that he had no fear whatsoever on that count. He was more terrified that if Nigel hesitated too long Darko would carry out his threat.

Adam looked away, his eyes caught by Gabi who had moved - still sitting but turned to face the men more directly. Her face was red and when she finally spoke her tone seemed to be angry as much as scared.

"What is this craziness?! Stop, stop this! Just let us g-"

Darko turned his gun on her, a sneer across his face. "Keep quiet beautiful, unless you want to volunteer for the bullet."

Adam frowned. He couldn't pretend to know exactly what was going on, but logic dictated that they were all equally likely to be shot at this point. Surely this situation meant that Darko wouldn't risk releasing any of them for fear of them telling the police?

"Girl makes me think Darko." Nigel spoke coldly, "How do I know you'll let her go after I've killed this asshole?"

Darko chuckled. "That's your problem brother. She's your woman. When you've killed this cocksucker you can take her home. If she squeals, that's on you. Your responsibility to make sure she doesn't. And you wouldn't any way, would you sweetheart." He turned his grinning face to Gabi who just glared back at him.

Darko turned back to Nigel - "Unless of course you want to fucking swap? You going to kill her and take that fucking pussy back home with you? Sure you can do that brother... Neither of you will make it to your car. But don't say I didn't give you the choice."

Adam had been mostly looking at their chests as they stood facing each other, the occasional glance up to their faces and across to Gabi's. He looked up now to take in Nigel's blank expression. Adam didn't know what they were going to do, what Nigel would do, but he knew that he would not pull that trigger.

And then he did.

*

It felt like the room was filled with liquid, as though he could see the bullet leave the gun and ripple through the air. He watched as Adam's eyes went wide and then his whole body jolted from the impact.

Adam careened back with such force that the shitty little sofa rocked and then toppled, flipping backwards and spilling Adam onto the floor behind with a thud.

For a moment there was silence.

It broke as Darko clapped a hand on his back, the sound echoing around the warehouse.

"Good choice brother, I wasn't sure for a moment. I guess that settles it - fucking stalker piece of shit, that pussy must have wanted you bad to go to those lengths. Was that a fucking tattoo on his arm or some shit?"

Nigel knew what Darko was doing. He likely didn't believe his own words, but he was happy to create this fiction because either it was true or Nigel was gay and had just killed his soulmate - something so extreme that Darko couldn't possibly question his loyalty.

"Gabi, go wait in my car gorgeous, I'll take you home." Nigel rumbled, looking at her.

She sat shaking, looking at the upturned sofa. After a moment she turned to him, tears streaked her face though she didn't seem to be crying - almost as though they flowed involuntarily.

"You... Nigel... you..."

"Didn't fuck shoot you darling, so shut your fucking mouth and get out in the car. Now!" He indicated with the gun that she should go. She got shakily to her feet and walked quickly. Nigel didn't watch her but felt a wave of relief when he heard the door bang closed behind her.

"Fucking women." Darko chuckled. "She'll get over it. And if she doesn't..." He trailed off with a grin at Nigel.

"Fuck Darko. Why did you have to bring her into it?" Nigel tried for the appropriate level of anger, which was nowhere near the amount he actually felt. "I'm not gonna fucking hear the end of this.

Couldn't you have just brought that asshole along?"

Darko waved a dismissive hand and shook his head, his only response to the question.

Nigel let out a sigh and tucked the gun in the back of his waistband. He pulled out his cigarettes and lit one, taking a deep drag and blowing it out slowly before he continued.

"So, what happens now? You passing this on to your boss? Tell him I've proved myself now... I want a fucking raise out of this you know, some fucking compensation for the shit this is going to cause with Gabi."

Darko chuckled. "I have faith brother, I'm sure you can sweet talk her. As for-"

A loud noise cut Darko off. The back door behind the small internal office slamming open. Shouting started then, lots of people, lots of noise. Nigel pulled the gun back out immediately, torn for a moment between training it on Darko or getting behind the sofa.

He tried so very hard not to let his heart beat out of his chest. But even years of perfecting this detachment to his situation, he felt like he might lose his mind at any moment. Shooting Adam had left him feeling sick to his stomach in a way he could barely fathom. As though he had cut a part of his soul out to do it.

“What the fuck.” Darko spun to face the noise. Nigel was pretty much functioning on autopilot and when he saw the look of anger on Darko's face as he began to understand what was happening, he knew he had to act.

"On the floor. On the floor. Get down now." The officers were shouting. Some of the men complying immediately, dropping their weapons and raising their hands as they lowered themselves.

Darko did not comply. Nigel's whole body was screaming to go to Adam, but he had to see this through. His cover was as good as blown now anyway, no need to protect himself by continuing to act his part.

It was over.

Nigel raised his gun towards Darko as the special unit spilled into the centre of the room. The surprise of their arrival had caught everyone off guard, but then shots began to ring out as some of the more stupid amongst Darko's crew decided they could shoot their way out of the raid.

The officers were shouting for people to drop their weapons, everyone seeking cover behind crates and anything else they could find. All but Darko, who stood frozen, watching the action with fury burning in his eyes. He knew he had been sold out, and now he was going to know who by -

Nigel cocked the pistol, immediately capturing Darko's attention. The man's eyes narrowed on him with an intense hatred Nigel had rarely seen the like of.

"It's over Darko. Tell them to stop fucking shooting, and surrender."

"You fucking cocksucking shit." Darko roared, going for his own gun again.

Everything moved too fast then and Nigel wasn't sure who was shooting any more as the sound ricocheted around him. He was backing away, trying to keep his gun on Darko as the man moved,

heading for the cover of the upturned sofa.

The thought of him near Adam filled Nigel with rage, his finger squeezing the trigger before he could even make the conscious decision to do it. Darko started firing as he moved, random shots that rang out around him.

Nigel didn't realise one of the bullets had hit him until he went down to the floor, the force of it ripping into his shoulder knocking him off his feet. Nigel scrambled forward, not feeling the pain as he snatched up the pistol it had thrown from his hand. He held it, shaking, in his other hand and started forward, trying to find Darko.

Feet were poking out the end of the sofa - Darko's shoes. Nigel rounded with caution, bullets still flying in the rest of the warehouse were starting to slow in frequency.

"Clear." He heard one of the unit shout. He looked back over his shoulder and watched as they all moved forward in synchornised and precise movements towards Darko's crew. Some were on the floor, others were stood or kneeling with hands in the air of behind their heads.

One of the officers started towards Nigel as he looked back to the sofa, the legs had moved.

Nigel rounded to see Darko holding a gun to Adam's temple. Adam was curled on his side, eyes closed and skin deathly pale.

"You ratted me out? For this poponar? Fucking faggot!" Darko cocked his gun and Nigel saw the slightest tremor run through Adam in response.

"Don't fucking do it brother." Nigel warned, his gun levelled, as was that of the officer who now rounded to sofa and took up Nigel's flank. "It's over. Don't make this fucking worse."

Darko looked at him with a deep hatred and hurt, roaring as he turned the gun on Nigel and fired.

The officer returned fire but Nigel didn't see if and where it hit, his eyes had slid over to Adam. He kept his eyes locked on his soulmate as he slumped, watching the gentle rise and fall of shallow breath as he felt coldness wash over him and his eyelids became too heavy to stay open.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Nigel wakes in hospital.

When Nigel came to, it was to the sound of a monitor beeping a slow rhythmic beat. It took him a few minutes to focus before he realised he wasn't dreaming, a few more minutes before he opened his eyes.

The room was dark but for the glow of a nightlight near a door and the low light emitted from the monitor that he now saw was tracking the beat of his heart. The smell of the room hit him then, bleach and blood. That rotten smell as wounds healed and flesh scabbed and fell away.

The smell brought him back to his circumstances and he looked down, eyes adjusting to the dim light. The sheet tucked around him at the waist and downward kept clear of the bandages that wrapped his chest and shoulder.

Adam.

The name came to mind and Nigel's memories reeled through their first meeting, making love and... shooting him.

A sudden wave of nausea gripped him and Nigel rolled, vomiting bile over the side of the bed before crying out with pain at the motion. He seemed frozen like that for long minutes, trying not to aggravate the pain further.

"Oh dear, lay back now, like this." There were suddenly gentle hands on him and he was eased back onto his back. There was more light now and Nigel realised the door had opened.

Nigel looked up into the face of a matronly nurse who poured sympathy onto him with her expression. "Can you get the duty doctor?" She asked, looking up at a younger nurse in the doorway who nodded and left.

The door was still open into a slightly more lit corridor, and the nurse was now checking the monitor. She adjust his bed some and turned up the room lights a little.

"Mr Lupescu, Detectiv..." The doctor said as she walked in. "Nice to see you finally awake. I think maybe you needed the rest." The doctor joked good naturedly and picked up his chart, looking over it as she continued -

"I'm Doctor Ungur. We've been looking after you since you were released from intensive care a few days ago. How much do you remember from the night you were brought in?" She looked at him then and Nigel shook his head, more that he wasn't sure he could talk than not wholly remembering. His tongue felt heavy and rough, like waking from a terrible hangover.

She smiled sympathetically. "It was quite a trauma, you may not recall all of it. You were admitted with two gunshot wounds. One to your shoulder and one to you chest. Both bullets have now been removed. Unfortunately the one in your chest was a little too close to your heart to not cause problems. It took a while to repair the damage. But here you are now." She smiled again. "A centimeter to the left and it would have been a different story. Your colleague Detectiv Scărlătescu asked us to call him when you woke, but I think we'll wait until morning. Maybe you'd like some more rest?"

"Adam." Nigel forced the name from his dry and rough throat. The nurse lifted a cup of water and put a straw to his lips. He sucked down a few cool and relieving pulls.

The doctor frowned, still with a sympathetic smile. "Adam? Is that someone you would like us to call for you?"

Nigel let out a frustrated grunt and shook his head. "He was... there." the words came slowly and painfully. "He was shot. I shot him."

"Another officer?" The nurse asked gently and he shook his head again. She looked at the doctor then and said "Only the politia were brought here, the others were taken to Floreasca. There was a large emergency response to an multi-vehicle accident and we couldn't take everyone. I can call and ask if they had anyone called Adam brought in." She looked down at Nigel, a comforting hand on his shoulder. "What is his surname, dear."

"Raki." Nigel rasped. "Adam Raki." He felt his chest splitting as he said it. What if Adam hadn't been taken to either hospital? What if he was in the morgue. He had tried so hard... calculated, but...

"I'll let you know as soon as I have any news." The nurse said and then, after a few more checks and tucking his sheet, they both left and Nigel found himself unable to stay awake.

*

"Hey."

Nigel woke to a dull pain in his arm. Realising slowly that he was being poked. Scărlătescu stood next to the bed and the room was lighter - a dull natural light coming from the window.

"You awake?"

"I am now." Nigel grumbled, his throat still dry but not as sore as it had been.

"What a fucking shit show." Scărlătescu growled. "Do you realise what a fucking mess you created."

Nigel let out a sigh. He was expecting this, or worse. He knew full well that if the law didn't protect soulmates he would have been put on leave pending an internal investigation. But still dismissed in the end. They couldn't do that. But he had no single doubt that his life would be made very difficult. He had no sooner thought it than Scărlătescu leaned in and menacingly hissed -

"Maybe I should cut you a break? You're a fucking good cop, for a faggot." The word was spat and Nigel was too desensitised to it to have any reaction. "But you fucked up. This whole fucking operation. The only fucking good thing you did was get yourself shot. We've used that as leverage on your fucking buddy Darko and he's rolled on the whole operation. It's not a total loss, but we

don't have the evidence we needed for the case we wanted to build. It will have to do." Every word came out dripping in anger and hatred.

Nigel wasn't a stranger to hate like this, though it never failed to baffle him how someone could feel such strong hatred for another just based on who that person was fucking.

"What about Adam?" Nigel asked when the storm whirling inside his colleague seemed to subside.

An angry puff of breath was followed by - "I don't fucking know what happened to your cockwarmer."

"He's a material witness." Nigel pointed out the practical side before remembering - "And Gabi."

"The girl?" Scărlătescu finally stopped looming over him and started to pace slowly around the room. "She's fine. She got picked up by officers outside as soon as she left the warehouse, we took her in. She was shaken up, gave her statement and we've sent her home. Had her checked over by the medics, but she's fine. Bit fucking confused as to what the fuck was going on. Can't say I don't feel the same way." He paused before letting out an exasperated breath. "Can't believe I've worked with you all these years and..." He trailed off with a sneer.

"If it's any consolation Scărlătescu, you're not my fucking type." Nigel spat.

Scărlătescu took three quick strides to the bed. "If you weren't already in that fucking bed, I'd put you there." His face was red with anger. Nigel didn't even get a rise out of it, just let out a sigh and closed his eyes.

"So what happens now? Am I being suspended?"

"Fuck, are you serious? Are you thinking right now you're going to be coming back to the General Directorate? Surely you've got more fucking brains than that? I can tell you that you will get a glowing fucking reference for you next job. Go work security somewhere, but you think any of your old colleagues will be happy working with a faggot? How would they trust you to have their back if you've been lying to them all these years?" He let out a belly laugh and Nigel opened his eyes to see the cruel look on Scărlătescu's face. "You might get lucky and land a shitty desk job, but you'll likely be demoted, and I can promise you... you come back, you'll wish you hadn't. Your choice pussy boy."

He clapped his hand down onto Nigel's bandaged shoulder before turning and walking out of the room. Leaving the door wide open.

Nigel let out a breath, gritting his teeth against the pain in his shoulder that he wasn't going to show the bastard. He wanted to scream. Wanted to shout after him that who he fucked, who he loved, wasn't relevant to his job and wasn't anyone's fucking business. But he knew it would just be a waste of air.

His first indignant thought had been to involve the internal investigations - he did have some protection from discrimination, even if Romania wasn't the most progressive country on that front. But then what? What if he kept his job and continued doing what he was doing now? What was to say his colleagues would still treat him the same? They wouldn't, he knew - Scărlătescu was right about that.

He'd be passed over for promotions, for good assignments. He would be passed over time and again for younger, less experienced, less capable colleagues because they fucked pussy.

So that was it. His career was over. Fucking over.

Nigel felt the rage bubble up within him, lashing out before he could think - knocking over the table that hovered over his bed - upending the jug of water.

At the sound of the crash some staff rushed in through the open door. Nurses he didn't recognise - the day shift.

"I want to see Adam." He growled at them.

"Calm down, sir." The closest said, some young little fucker who looked like he was barely old enough to shave let alone be qualified for his job.

Being told to calm down sent sparks of anger through him. Nigel wasn't that guy, sure he had a temper, but he was always controlled. He didn't flare up in fits of rage like some might. Until that moment. Had the nurse been closer he would have lashed out, instead he began screaming back.

"Don't tell me to fucking calm down you little shit. Where is the nurse from last night? Where is the doctor? Where is Adam? Can someone tell me where the fuck Adam is?" He was shouting, his blood boiling as he tried to get out of the bed and the nurses tried to keep him in it. There was a tousle and suddenly security was there restraining him and he could vaguely comprehend a nurse threatening to sedate him if he didn't calm down.

"You fucking calm down." He shouted, his throat raw as he was manhandled back against the pillows. "Someone fucking find out where the fuck Adam fucking Raki is!" He shouted.

Fear fed his rage. Fear that Adam was dead. That he had killed him. Fear that his life was over - his career gone and with no Adam, for what? Just as the overwhelming rage and terror began to overtake him he felt the prick of the needle. He struggled for a moment, thrashing against the hands that held him down to receive his consequences.

After a few moments everything went dark.

*

When Nigel came to it was dark again.

It was the fussing around him that had brought him to - the matronly nurse from the previous night was plumping his pillows a little.

"Oh! Nice to see you awake again!" She smiled at him. "It was touch and go for a moment there, but you're well cared for here."

Nigel tried to sit but felt groggy. He felt like shit. Worse than he had when he had woken up before. His mouth was dry and his whole body ached. The dull pain in his shoulder radiated through his entire upper body.

"Would you like to try some water?" The nurse asked, putting the straw to his lips. He sucked and let the cool liquid soothe his throat. Felt like someone had shoved something down it, and not in a pleasant way.

"What happened?" He managed to croak.

"You were a little upset after your colleague came to visit. You had to be restrained and unfortunately the stitches in your shoulder ripped. You're all fixed up again now, but you were already sedated and the anaesthetist had a few issues. You might be a little nauseous. Let me know if you want something for that." She smiled at him comfortingly.

He nodded almost dismissively, glad of her kindness but with a more pressing issue in mind. "Did you find Adam?" He asked, trying not to feel too hopeful.

Her smile faded and his stomach plummeted at what that might mean. He managed to struggle up in the bed so he was almost sitting, grunting at the pain in his shoulder.

"Is he ok?"

"I'm sure he's fine." She reassured him before using the controls on the side of the bed to raise the end so that he could lay back and still be upright.

"I was able to locate him last night but you were still unconscious. He was released from-"

"How long was I out? Where is he?" Nigel tripped over his own questions and she rested a hand on his arm in a calming gesture.

"You were restrained yesterday morning and went for surgery as soon as they could fit you in. You've been recovering since. You've slept a good twenty four hours."

Nigel felt every part of his body aching in a completely new way. A way that he knew was emotional or mental rather than physical. Adam was alive? But where? The sense of loss was growing every minute and it felt like it was choking his soul. He felt like he was getting further and further from Adam with every moment he was stuck in this bed. Was he imagining it? What if Adam was actually on his way back to America?

"Your friend was taken to Floreasca Hospital, and treated there for a gunshot wound to his shoulder. Just a graze. From what I could get out of the nurses there, he was pretty shaken up but the injury itself was little more than superficial. He was kept in initially to make sure he was safe and well. American, yes?" She smiled at Nigel. "Apparently a very polite young man who spent a lot of time asking about you. When he was discharged one of his colleagues collected him and that is the last I know."

"He's alive." Nigel felt the relief wash over him as the words escaped him on a sob - allowing himself to finally acknowledge it for certain. His whole body shuddered as he gave into the emotions that were trying to pull him apart and put him back together again.

"There, there." The nurse took hold of his hand and squeezed it. "He's just fine I'm sure. I would imagine he would have come to see you, but the nurse I spoke to - they didn't know where the officers had been taken and what they were allowed to divulge, so they couldn't much help him when he asked for you."

A fresh pain stabbed through his heart at the idea of Adam asking for him. Wanting him. After what he did.

He had tried to aim so very precisely. Hoped that Adam would understand. He had pulled the trigger and hoped Adam would be injured enough to play dead, or as good as. To understand that he needed blanket himself in the safety of that subterfuge. But he had never had chance to check and see, to make sure that Adam wasn't really dead, or dying.

"I need to get out of here." Nigel started trying to get out of the bed once more, feeling the immediate sharp pull in his skin of various tubes and wires.

The nurse put up her hands to gentle him back. "Don't make me call security." She said jovially. "You won't be going anywhere for another few days yet. Once the doctor is happy with your recover and satisfied that there won't be more bleeds or complications." She moved her hands to his stomach, one of the only parts of his upper body not bandaged, and eased him back. "We don't want you to tear some stitches once you're out of our care. Let us look after you Detectiv."

Nigel lay back, exhaustion and pain factoring as much as the kind nurse's instance.

"I need to find Adam." He looked at her, and knew she saw the determination in his eyes.

"I'll see what I can do, but I think there's every chance he might find you."

*

Adam sat in his apartment, at the little table by the window. Watching.

Dumitru had told him to take at least a week if not more before he came back to work. To let himself heal. But Adam wasn't even sure he wanted to go back there.

He felt like he was being torn by a dual need - to see Nigel and to go home.

As much as he had enjoyed his time in Romania, he had left the hospital desperately longing to return to the familiarity and comfort of his friends and job back in California. He just as desperately longed to see Nigel.

So he sat in limbo, watching to see if Nigel came to him. Phoning Floreasca Hospital to ask every day if they had heard anything. But they either couldn't or wouldn't tell him anything. Adam started to wonder if Nigel was even really his name.

No. He had been honest about that. About a lot of things. Honest but secretive. He understood that there had been some things that Nigel couldn't tell him until the time was right. And Darko had changed all of that.

Now he knew more, but not enough. Not enough for him to be able to find Nigel.

He knew that Nigel was an informant or a criminal. That Darko was some sort of criminal and that Gabi had been part of his cover. There was more, of course. Some of which he would likely never know, unless Nigel was able to tell him.

Some he had come to know that evening as people talked around him - as Darko shouted abuse at Nigel's prone form. Other bits he pieced together... partly when Gabi had come to his side as he was being loaded into the ambulance. She knew him through Darko and his friends and always suspected they were less than savoury. He confessed to her that they were soulmates and she had

nodded, her face pale. She had seemed sad but maybe also relieved - maybe she considered it a lucky escape.

Adam realised, even after everything, he would have stayed with Nigel. Even if he were the criminal that he had seemed to be. Adam would have stayed.

Not just because Nigel was his soulmate, but because he loved him. He was in love with him - it was the most agonising thing he had ever experienced. And he never wanted it to stop.

*

The last he had seen of Nigel was as they were being loaded onto stretchers. He was trying to reach out to Nigel but they were put in different ambulances. Nigel had been unconscious the whole time.

What if he was dead?

Adam shook off the chill that shivered over his skin and made every hair stand on end. Nigel couldn't be dead. Adam would know that, surely? Of course he would know if his soulmate died.

He had known about Nigel and Gabi. He would know this.

Adam picked up his phone and dialled the hospital again. He went through his usual greeting before being put through to admissions who told him they couldn't help. Only this time as he was about to hang up he heard a voice call off in the distance and the receptionist ask him to wait a moment. He heard the phone being passed over to someone else and then a new voice -

"Mr Raki?"

"Yes." Adam's heart leapt into his throat.

"I have a message for you from one of the nurses at Regina Maria. Detectiv Nigel Lupescu is a patient there, recovery ward. She has advised you check their website for visiting hours."

"Thank you." Adam's voice quavered as he replied. His hand shook as he hung up the phone. His heart pounded and his whole body curled over. Adam gripped his knees and rocked as he let himself slump from the chair to the floor. Overwhelmed in that moment by the information he had received. Nigel was alive. Nigel was at Regina Maria.

Adam's sobs came out loudly and unbidden.

*

It was the next day before the visiting hours were available again and Adam took a taxi to the hospital. Even with his Romanian translation app and what he had picked up of the language, it was unbelievable difficult.

He was mistaken for an outpatient. He was misdirected unintentionally and accidentally. It took over an hour to finally find the ward that Nigel was on. By which time he was beating a rhythm almost painfully against his thigh, keeping his focus so that he could find Nigel. That was all that mattered.

"I'm looking for Detectiv Nigel Lupescu." He mumbled when he finally reached what, was potentially, the correct nurses station. He repeated the phrase as best he could in broken Romanian.

There was some talking amongst the nurses before a young man stepped forward. His English was pretty good as he replied. "Sorry, he is not - isn't - here anymore. He left this morning."

"I..." Adam felt like his insides were falling. "No, he has to be here. The nurse on the phone said he would be here."

"He was here." The nurse nodded. "But he discharged himself." When he went to put his hand on Adam's arm, Adam drew back sharply. That caused a pull on his stitches and he cried out at the unexpected pain.

"No." Adam backed away. He didn't even think, didn't really process what he was doing until he realised he was running down a corridor. And then another. The hospital was a maze, and he was trapped. And Nigel wasn't there.

He wished he was back home. Not California but New York. With his dad, with Harlan. People who cared about him and kept him safe and sheltered.

It was the thought of getting home that pushed him. Get back to the apartment. And then back to America, then back to New York.

But his dad wouldn't be there…

He tried to ignore the thought. Get back to California.

He hailed a cab.

*

"Adam. Please." Nigel knocked on the door again.

His whole body ached. The cannula was still in his hand but at least the fucking catheter was out. He'd grabbed his bag of clothes and skipped out of that hospital room as soon as the nurse removed it. And not before time too - he was on the verge of ripping the fucking thing out himself.

It hurt to breath.

It hurt to walk and bus from the hospital back to the neighbourhood seemed to hit every pothole. And he wasn't stupid, there might be a price on his head out here. Darko was in custody, but it wasn't like it all ended with him.

So now he was knocking an apartment door, cold and in pain and hoping to fuck that no nefarious bastards happened upon him. His eyes started to droop and he wondered if he fell asleep whether he might just slip into a coma. He probably shouldn't have left the hospital…

"Nigel?" The voice was shaky, scared. His eyes snapped open.

Adam was stood in the stairwell, his arms hugged tight around himself. He looked small.

"Adam." Nigel tried to move but slumped back down.

Adam raced to him, dropping to his knees to help support him. He could see Adam wince as his own injury was strained trying to sit Nigel upright.

“You’re here.” Adam said. He looked at him and then blinked.

Nigel smiled. “I am gorgeous. I had to find you. I… I thought you had left. It felt like you were leaving... I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to hurt you… ”

Adam shook his head. “I know. I understand. When you arrived and the things you said… I understood what was happening. When you fired the gun I knew you had a reason. So I just, um… played dead. I thought that was what you wanted?”

Nigel felt hot tears on his face and he shook his head in wonder. “I was so terrified I’d really hurt you, that I'd killed you. I couldn’t… if you had died, I…”

“I’m fine, Nigel.” Adam said, bringing their foreheads together. “You saved me. And now I’m going to save you.”

He tasted the salt of his own tears in the gentle kiss Adam pressed to his lips. Nothing mattered anymore. Only Adam.

He let Adam save him.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Seven Weeks Later...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Seven Weeks Later

Nigel winced at the niggling pain in his shoulder and chest as he hoisted his bag. He was healing well and there was part of him that knew his pain was sometimes more mental than physical. That it was actually the pain of being separated from his soulmate being manifested into something more... real.

But that was going to end today.

He stepped back from the luggage carousel as others jostled forward to take his position and find their own bags and cases. The place was busy, and had a very different feel to Bucharest.

He battled his way out through the crowds, realising he was smiling. His heart was light, his soul buzzing.

When he had handed over his passport and it showed his spousal visa, he had been welcomed by the agent with a wide smile and kind words. As she stamped his entry she started chattering excitedly about finding her own soulmate overseas, that he'd had to get one of those special visas too. The kind with no restrictions - instant citizen of your other half's country.

He had smiled back at her and hadn't stopped since, as he made his way out of the airport and into the hot Californian sunshine.

Nigel closed his eyes and took a deep breath, filling his lungs with the scent of a fresh start. Of hot tarmac, engine oil and sweet smelling blossom.

"Nigel." His name was muttered with a mixture of shyness and excitement. "You're here."

He opened his eyes to find Adam stood in front of him. His eyes were elsewhere and then on his for a moment before they left him again, as was Adam's way. A few moments later Adam looked back again and held his eyes, his smile wide.

"I missed you."

"I missed you too gorgeous." Nigel breathed out the words on a heavy sigh as he dropped his bag and pulled Adam to him. Their mouths connected effortlessly, their bodies pressed against the line of the other as they kissed slowly.

It likely wasn't smart to get themselves worked up, but after everything it had taken for them to get to this point in their lives - every thing that had made them who they were before they even met - Nigel just didn't give a fuck. He didn't care if someone had an issue with this. He was in America - home of the fucking free. He no longer had to hide himself for the sake of his job. He no longer had to worry about getting the shit kicked out of him by criminals and colleagues alike.

"Nigel..." Adam said his name on a moan and he forced himself to pull back.

"Maybe we should go... um..."

"Home." Adam smiled. "We can go home. To my apartment. You... uh..." He seemed a little self conscious as he continued. "You can stay with me as long as you like. Or.. um.."

Nigel chuckled. "Darling, you're going to get sick of the sight of me. I'm never leaving your side again."

Adam grinned, his eyes cast down. "I'd never get sick of you Nigel."

Nigel felt his heart swell. Fuck, he loved that feeling.

He knew soulmates were destined to love each other, there had never been a case where they hadn't. But he hadn't expected this when he met Adam. He hadn't known that love could go this deep and be this solid with someone he was still getting to know. No wonder people fucking hungered for this.

He clasped Adam's hand and picked up his bag, letting Adam lead him to the taxi rank and home.

*

Adam's palms were sweaty.

He was nervous. This wasn't like the usual sort of anxiety he felt. This was almost pleasant - a thrill in a way - and he knew it, in part, was coming from Nigel. They sat in the back of the cab making small talk, but he could feel Nigel through their bond. He was eager with anticipation and that was making Adam feel the same - it was a positive feedback loop that finally drove them to a loaded silence.

They had discussed the flight. The food. How things had gone for Nigel in Bucharest when he had to wrap up his case report and then leave his job. The skype interviews he'd had with the local law enforcement and new job he started in the Major Crimes Division when all his paperwork came through from Bucharest.

Adam had told him about starting back at his old job and how nice everyone was, how much he realised he'd missed them. And that his friend Harlan had visited and wanted to visit again from New York when Nigel arrived, or they could go there. He was just happy either way that Adam was so happy and had met someone so upstanding - as he called it.

But those conversations came to a dwindling end as the bond fed their feelings back to each other. Adam was biting his lower lip, his chest uncomfortably tight with the effort of breathing normally. Nigel wasn't making the same effort, his breath coming in ragged bursts until he finally leaned in and muttered against Adam's ear -

"Are we far darling? I need you so much right now."

Adam shuddered at the words and balled his fists on his thighs, resisting the urge to touch Nigel. He shook his head. "Not far. A few more blocks."

Maybe everyone in this situation felt the same? Adam was sure anyone who'd had such a dramatic experience in meeting their soulmate, and then been separated from them for a month, would equally feel this burning need to consummate their reunion.

He was just glad that the cab was pulling up outside his apartment when Nigel let out a whine and pressed the heel of his hand to his crotch. Adam was in the same discomfort but resisted the urge to do the same in order to take the cab fare out of his wallet and pay the driver.

Adam was out of the car faster than he was sure he had moved in his entire life. He waited at the trunk and then grabbed Nigel's bag as soon as it opened. He was stalking up the path to his building when he felt Nigel crowd behind him.

"Fuck, Adam. I'm not even going to last long." Nigel chuckled against the back of his neck.

Adam dropped the bag and searched his pockets for his key to the building. He didn't dare turn back and look at Nigel, he wasn't sure he had any more control left.

Instead he opened the door and hurried in before turning, he watched Nigel grab his bag and follow him.

And then Nigel was on him. Kissing him up against the wall as Adam tried to push the door closed. He wanted to tell Nigel to stop so they could get to his apartment and out of the shared foyer but instead he wrapped his whole body around the man. First his arms around his neck and then Nigel pulled his legs up around his waist and Adam wasn't sure how, but the bag had ended up on the floor again.

"Do you want me to fuck you gorgeous?" He muttered against Adam's mouth. "Or... you can fuck me.. I just... I need to be close to you... I need..."

Adam was nodding, mumbling. "I know... I know... Yes..."

Adam broke away, setting his feet back on the floor before pulling Nigel up the stairs. Nigel went easily, the bag left in the foyer, forgotten in the moment.

*

Adam wasn't sure how they made it through his apartment door, Nigel must have taken the keys from his hand as they took the short flight of stairs to the first floor. It might have happened during one of the moments that they had paused on the stairs to kiss and grind on each other.

He remembered vividly how they'd had sex before everything had happened back in Bucharest. How he had been inside Nigel, and he wanted that too. He wanted so much for Nigel to take him the same way.

"I practiced." Adam muttered against Nigel's lips as they somehow crossed the threshold and Nigel closed the door behind them.

"What baby?" Nigel asked, his mouth moving to the side of Adam's neck, sucking and nuzzling there in a way that made Adam tingle all over and tilt his head in invitation. It had never been like this with Beth. It never could have been with anyone but Nigel, he was sure.

"With a dildo... I bought a dildo." Adam replied, breathless from the attention moving from his neck to little nips at his throat. "To fuck myself, like I fucked y- ahhh"

At the words Nigel bit too hard, as though what Adam said had made his mouth slam shut. Adam yelped and Nigel reeled back before moving in again and pulling him into a tight hug.
"Sorry darling, I'm sorry... I... you surprised me. Fuck... do you even know how hot you are? You're so fucking perfect." The words were mouthed against his ear. "Do you want me to fuck you baby?"

Adam nodded, moaning as Nigel resumed kissing his neck.

"Tell me what you want." Nigel paused his kisses to ask.

"I want you to fuck me Nigel. I want to feel you inside me, like I was inside you."

He felt Nigel shudder against him. Nigel's hips gave a sudden little thrust as though jolted into life by his words. Crushing their hard lengths together for a tantalising moment that had Adam moaning again.

"Now, please Nigel." Adam pleaded, willing himself not to become overwhelmed.

"Bedroom?" Nigel asked as he pulled back. Adam took his hand and lead the way down the short hallway.

"The dildo isn't as big as you... I didn't know what I should buy... It felt so good. I imagined it was you every time I used it." Adam explained as they entered his neat and tidy room.

Nigel crowded behind him, pushing himself against Adam's ass in a way that made him whimper with need.

"Fuck. Do you even know what you do to me? Tell me.... more... how did it feel?"

"So good." Adam panted, a soft thrill trembling through him at the reaction he brought out in Nigel as they stood before his pristine bed, that the night before he had penetrated himself on whilst thinking of his soulmate. "Full... in such a good way. I kept thinking how much better you would feel in person. Bigger, and... warm, pulsing. I imagined what it would be like to feel you cum inside me. Like the pornos and… I really want that... I know it will be messy, but I.... I think it will be ok. We can shower..."

"I'll take care of you baby, don't you worry." Nigel managed before he was kissing him again and pawing at his clothes.

Adam stepped back and pulled his sweater over his head and started to unbutton his shirt. He jumped when he felt Nigel's hands on his belt buckle, momentarily startled by the action before he found himself just willing the man to get the belt open. Which he did, in short time, unbuttoning Adam's fly before he had even finished with his shirt buttons.

They pushed the clothes off at the same time - Adam dropping his shirt to the floor as Nigel pushed his underwear and trousers down in one before dropping to his knees. The action had Adam

whimpering and he felt his cock throb in anticipation a moment before Nigel's mouth was on it.

His hands went straight to Nigel's hair and gripped tight, trying to keep up right as much as anything.

"Nigel…" He whimpered as Nigel took him all the way into his mouth and then just held him there, swirling his tongue.

Nigel gave a sharp grunt when Adam's fingers tightened against his scalp.

"It's too much... please..." the words trembled as Adam spoke them. He was already achingly oversensitive and his mind already focused on the expected sex.

Nigel pulled back gently, releasing him with a slight pop before laying a gentle kiss on his cockhead. Adam was shaking and needed to sit, his knees weak from the sensations and his own desire. He allowed Nigel to ease him back onto the bed so that he was finally sitting on the bed, but Nigel remained and pulled off the shoes and socks that were now tangled with Adam's trousers and underwear. Once freed and completely naked Adam scooted up the bed, his chest heaving with quickening breaths of anticipation as his heart thudded almost painfully.

It felt like a panic attack but he knew it wasn't. It felt good, if frightening.

He knew it was love.

"I love you Nigel." He blurted as the words entered his mind as he watched Nigel divesting his own clothes. "I didn't know it was possible to miss someone so much when we hardly knew each other. But-"

Nigel stepped out of the last of his clothes and climbed over him, taking his mouth in a kiss gentler than he was expecting. Their cocks slid against each other and twitched at the touch, drawing a moan from Nigel.

"I know..." Nigel muttered against his lips. "I feel the same."

"Please..." Adam whimpered again as his hips jolted with an unconscious need.

Nigel pulled back and rested their foreheads together as they both caught their breath.

"Do you have lube, Adam? Condoms?"

Adam nodded and moved, shuffling under Nigel until he could reach the bedside drawer and pull it out. Nigel leaned over and reached in then - there was a fresh box of condoms and half used tube of lube next to his dildo.

He heard Nigel audibly swallow and shudder slightly, before he grabbed the lube and condoms and sat back on the bed.

Adam felt cold at the sudden loss of his warmth, despite the hot day. He propped himself on his elbows and watched Nigel open the box, then the wrapper and then roll a condom onto himself. He squirted some lube into his palm and stroked his cock a couple of times with his eyes closed.

He looked beautiful. His handsome face, his toned body - even the still healing fresh scars of the bullets that had hit him long weeks earlier, added to the beauty. The beauty that was so wholly him

and would never be found in anyone else.

*

Nigel squeezed the base of his cock in an effort to show it who was boss. He was not going to cum before he even was inside Adam.

He wanted to take this slow, but the fact was, a month apart and Adam telling him about fucking himself for him... he wasn't sure he would last long at all. Maybe that was best for Adam? He didn't want to overwhelm him and ruin this experience.

But damn...

He opened his eyes and saw the lustful look in Adam's wide gaze. Did he even know what he looked like? His short curls tousled, eyes blown with lust as they held Nigel's gaze for longer than they ever had before. He was beautiful. He was an angel.

One that had saved him from Darko, from his job, from the lies. Just by existing, for starters. It had only been this month apart that he had let himself really assess how lonely and unhappy he really had been. One way or the other it would have killed him eventually. He would have gotten careless on a assignment - get found out one way or the other. How long did he really think he could have lived his life the way he was? Denying himself the way he had been, before it had started to affect him in dangerous ways? A loss of focus, being somehow outed. One way or the other it was going to happen. And the way it *had* finally happened could not have been better.

Because some of the worst that could have happened did but the payoff was Adam. And Adam was worth more than two bullets and losing a job with bigoted assholes.

And that's what it really came down to. Adam really had saved him.

"Nigel?" Adam looked at him with questioning and longing, prompting him to action.

He took Adam's legs and moved them back, so they were open and bent at the knee, falling apart for him as Adam's breathing became faster, heavier.

"I will take care you gorgeous. I mean that. Not just in this... In everything, forever. Just like you're going to take care of me."

A little noise escaped Adam and he looked so totally vulnerable in that moment even as he nodded his agreement.

Nigel squeezed more lube out, to the tip of his fingers, before he slid them over Adam's hot flesh. He watched Adam intently for any sign of discomfort as he circled his hole with a gentle but insistent press.

Adam bit at his lower lip, breathing even more erratic and hands clutching at the bedsheets.

"Tell me how you like it Adam... how you like to do this yourself. Is there a-"

"You can push inside." Adam replied quickly. Followed by a trembled "Please."

Nigel did so, letting one finger slip in a short way. And slip in it did, little resistance as he felt the glide of the lube and Adam's relaxed muscles and -

"When did you last fuck yourself darling?"

"Last night." Adam moaned his reply and let his head drop back as Nigel started to work the finger in and out - further in each time and over his prostate. "I was looking forward to seeing you and couldn't wait... I thought about what it would be like to finally do this with you." Adam admitted in a babble of words that had Nigel's cock throbbing painfully. "I screamed your name when I came."

"Fuck." Nigel took a deep breath and stilled for a moment. Willing himself not to cum right there and then.

"Are you alright?"

Nigel huffed a laugh. "Adam, I might have to get you to stop with the dirty talk otherwise this is going to end sooner rather than later."

Adam looked confused. "Because I told you about the dildo?"

Nigel nodded and started moving his finger again. He pressed in a second, which had Adam collapsing back once more, though his hips sought to sink him further onto the intrusion. "You're so relaxed and open to me gorgeous. Nearly ready for me." Nigel cooed.

He started to stretch Adam out as he slowly moved in and out of him. Feeling him ease open nicely from the previous night's fucking and how damn relaxed he was. He felt the occasional tightening around his fingers at the same time he would see Adam's cock twitch - both parts searching for a promised release.

"Please Nigel... please..." Adam started to beg with words and body as his moved against Nigel's fingers - seeking more.

"Okay gorgeous. I've got you." He tried to sound confident but inside everything turned to liquid. He had never wanted to please someone so much in his entire life, had never anticipated something so much. His heart was beating so fast he thought it might leap up and out through his throat. "Fuck." His hands trembled as he drew back, pulling his fingers free from Adam and picking up the lube.

Nigel was shaking as he applied more to his cock to be sure, stroking it up and down and wondering if he was, in fact, going to have a fucking heart attack. At least he'd die a happy man.

"Nigel?" Adam was looking with concern again.

"It's ok, I've-"

"You've got me Nigel. It's ok. You don't need to be scared or anxious. I'm not. You have me and I have you. It's ok."

Nigel didn't realise he was crying until he felt the tears rolling down his cheeks as he nodded.

Adam reached his arms out to him and Nigel went to him, lying over him and resting his head in the crook of Adam's neck as he composed himself. The tears didn't stop but he took a few shaky breaths, enough to regain control enough for this.

Nigel propped himself up for a moment and reached between them, guiding his cock into Adam's heat - still tight around him even for how open he had felt.

Adam moaned and arched. "So good... so good..."

Nigel felt fresh tears as he felt a rush of pleasure and adoration that wasn't just his but something surging through their bond.

He nuzzled into Adam's neck, kissing and sucking the soft skin there as he started to move slowly.

Nigel eased back and then pushed in, a little further each time until on the fifth thrust he was deep within Adam.

Perfect Adam.

He moved again then, from Adam's neck to his mouth - seeking with his lips until he found Adam's and kissed him slowly. Deeply. He mirrored the languid lovemaking of his tongue with the gentle and slow thrusts of his body. Wanting to savour this all and drag it out. Wanting it to last forever.

Adam returned the kiss enthusiastically and wrapped his arms and legs around Nigel, pulling him in closer. There was barely any distance between them as Nigel started to rock each slow thrust. Deep now, so very deep and tight. Each thrust pulled a soft sound from Adam and an occasional sharp breath when his prostate was touched.

He felt Adam's cock leaking copious precum between them, his lower belly damp with it as each movement brought Adam closer to release too.

"I... Nigel I'm going to cum soon..." Adam said, breathlessly.

Nigel could only nod, already having to focus in order to stave of his own release.

Minutes passed as he continued the gentle rocking, trying to keep control for them both, before he changed angle and moved a little harder, a little faster. Adam was crying out on each thrust as the new angle stroked perfectly against his prostate. He clutched to Nigel as though for dear life and dug his fingers into the flesh of his back.

"Nigel..." Adam kept repeating his name over and over in a shuddering chant, almost a sob.

Maybe he was crying. Nigel was too. Tears flowing freely. He could taste them on his lips, on Adam's lips too where they brushed together here and there. Tears of joy at what, was really, his first time making love. Not just fucking someone because they were there and he needed the release. But being with someone he loved, and expressing that with his body in a way he never really had with anyone before.

This was everything. Adam was everything.

He rocked them faster still, chasing that release now, needing them to both find it in each other and sensing that Adam would find it soon.

"Nigel" Adam cried out one last time. He felt Adam spill between them, his hot cum soiling their bellies where they pressed together. He felt Adam's inner muscles tighten with the release and plunged into them. Two more long thrusts and he was coming deep within his soulmate.

Someone was groaning, and it took Nigel a moment to realise it was both of them. Both lost in their own and each other's pleasure as it zinged through the bond that connected them.

Nigel shuddered, overcome with the emotions he had denied himself for years. And he felt from Adam... sympathy, understanding. Adam knew what it was to be overwhelmed.

Adam pulled him tight, whispering words of comfort as Nigel collapsed onto him and cried. Let those emotions pour out as he shuddered and shattered. He sobbed uncontrollably as Adam held him and told him everything would be alright. They had each other. Everything was fine now.

*

They woke the next morning, wrapped in each other. Adam seemed to stiffen against Nigel as he started to wake. But then Nigel sensed his realisation as he sighed and sank against him, allowing Nigel to envelope him in his warmth.

Nigel nuzzled into the back of his neck.

"You did save me gorgeous. Like you said, back in Bucharest. I didn't even know I needed saving, but you found me and saved me from that life."

They were quiet for a moment, perhaps Adam was still really waking up.

"I... I thought you liked your job." Adam asked before turning in his arms so that they were face to face..

"I did. But you saved me from... from having to lie for the rest of my life. I know things aren't perfect here, maybe we'll still get some hassle. But I have a job to go to where they already know about you. I have expertise they want and prospects. A job I might enjoy as much as the last - more even - without having to pretend I'm someone I'm not and hide the person I love... I love you Adam..."

Adam smiled and snuggled into his chest.

"I love you too Nigel."

And that moment - that smile, the warmth in Adam's eyes and the way their bodies slotted together in perfect comfort for each other - that was it. That was the moment Nigel realised he was home.

The End

*

*

*

Quantico, 2013

"Doubt thou the stars are fire, Doubt that the sun doth move. Doubt truth to be a liar, But never doubt I love." He stopped and looked around the room at the puzzled faces. His class was definitely not used to him spouting poetry, rather more accustomed to him showing them dead bodies. "Anyone want to tell me what Hamlet was on about?"

Will Graham smiled as one hand went up amongst many blank stares.

"Yes?" He didn't remember the kid's name. But then, he rarely took enough notice to remember any of their names. It was easier that way.

"That they are soulmates? He's talking about soulmates. Um... the undeniable truth of soulmates?" The kid's confidence faltered in her answer but Will nodded.

"Yeah, spot on. It's a theme Shakespeare plays with a lot - that love is inevitable between soulmates. That no matter how much you may doubt facts and truth, you have to believe in love between soulmates. And why is it relevant to what we are studying today?"

"Serial killers at The Agency?" One idiot guffawed and Will was glad it was met with groaning derision from his classmates rather than amusement.

"No." Will responded cooly. "Motive. It goes to motive." He clicked the clicker and a slide came up of a particularly gory crime scene. "Every killer has a motive, even if it isn't something we can ascertain or understand. Being able to identify their MO can help us predict them, catch them."

He clicked to the next slide - mugshots. "Meet Dana Zuckerman and Patrick Johnson."

Will adjusted his glasses and looked at the room. "A criminal is a criminal. Having a soulmate doesn't alter what a person is or isn't capable of, but it can give them motive. Every day, all over the world people meet their soulmates, one way or the other. Some for better, some for worse. Having a soulmate doesn't change a person, but finding them may change the course of their lives."

The buzzer went and the class started to move and file out. "We'll pick this up next time. I want you to come prepared to discuss Zuckerman and Johnson's killing spree and how their being soulmates resulted in them being apprehended."

He didn't watch them go as he spoke, instead he got his papers in order at the lectern.

He walked across and turned off the projector. As it whirred to a stop Will looked at the back of his hand. The slight tattoo that peeked out from under his sleeve. The tattoo he'd had indelibly imprinted over his soulmark. Even so the image of it - the dark, soft edged antler, as though feathered at the edges - was burned into his mind. No matter how he tried to ignore it, forget it, he would always live in dread of ever meeting someone with that very same mark.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you all enjoyed it! I feel like it ends ok there, but keep toying with the idea of a Hannigram follow up, so let me know your thoughts.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!